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# HGO merchandiser

SUMMER 2019

Volume Eight, Issue 2



**CELEBRATING  
THE 2019  
Retail Sales  
Professional  
Awards**



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# CELEBRATING THE BEST



MICHAEL J. KNELL

The 2019 recipients of the RSP Awards truly are the future of furniture and home furnishings retailing in this country. Their role will become even more important as e-commerce stakes out an ever-bigger share of the pie. So will the Canadian Furniture Show.

**C**ELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IS NOT SOMETHING WE DO ENOUGH of, particularly in this industry. This is one of the reasons why I'm particularly proud of HGO's collaboration with ZucoraHome in the creation of the *Retail Sales Professional Awards* program, the 2019 honourees of which are profiled and feted in the pages that follow.

At risk of sounding repetitive, this is the only industry program I can find in North America dedicated to saluting the contributions and achievements of those entrusted with its most important task – serving the customer. Those men and women on the retail sales floor have the industry's collective fate in their hands everyday. It sounds like a cliché but that doesn't make it any less true.

In my opinion, their role and contribution will become more important as e-commerce swallows are increasing share of the consumer's furniture, mattress and appliance spending. It is becoming obvious the internet is going to be the place to buy relatively inexpensive, everyday commodities households – especially new ones – need. The \$59 stool. The \$199 chair for the TV room. But once needs become wants and the question becomes one of style and substance, the internet can't become what Donald Cooper so brilliantly describes as the caring coach. Software just can't make that intuitive leap. This means the sales associate is going to become even more important to the process.

For the first time in more than three decades, I didn't attend the Canadian Furniture Show this year. Rest assured, HGO was ably represented, as you will read later in this issue, but I was forced to the sidelines for health reasons. I'm back at the computer and having chatted with people who walked the floor at the International Centre can't help but be concerned about the future of our only national furniture industry event.

The increasing role of e-commerce will also make CFS more important, especially to brick-and-mortar retailers. Ours is a tactile business. The internet gives a visual but gives no clue as to texture and feel. Retail buyers need to go to events like CFS for the same reasons the consumer needs to visit a store. I don't know what the show will look like in five years time. I don't know where it will be held.

What I do know is this. The Canadian industry will be much poorer without it. If it has any chance to survive, the industry has a whole must support it. So, on that note, I hope to see you next January.

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# DISCOVER THE EXTRAORDINARY

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AWARDS

# CELEBRATING OUR BEST RETAIL SALESPEOPLE

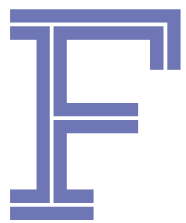


From left to right: Brad Geddes, president of ZurcoraHome and presenting sponsor of the *Retail Sales Professional Awards* program is seen here with the 2019 award recipients: Parry Gallagher of Coombs Junction Furniture; Amanda Mansfield of Hampton House Furniture; Christina Lamont of Smitty's Fine Furniture; and, Jennifer Nelson of Leon's Furniture.

For the third straight year, we've sought out to celebrate the finest of our industry's gatekeepers, the associates and managers working on retail floors across the country. This year's recipients have each fashioned a rewarding career by giving the customer the best in professional service.

**INTRODUCTION BY MICHAEL J. KNELL • WINNER PROFILES BY ASHLEY NEWPORT**





FOR THE THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR, *Home Goods Online* – in collaboration with ZucoraHome – organised the *Retail Sales Professional Awards*, whose goal to seek out and celebrate the best salespeople and sales managers working in 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 Vancouver Island to the Avalon Peninsula continues to be truly impressive.

When the call for nominations was published, Brad Geddes, president and chief executive officer of ZucoraHome, the London-based home service plan provider and Presenting Sponsor of the *Retail Sales Professional Awards* (RSPA), pointed out the retail sales associate really does 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, do enough to 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 2019 RSP Awards program exceeded those received in each of the previous years. "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."

Geddes also noted the sheer number of nominations received for the 2019 RSP Awards program exceeded those received in each of the previous years. "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."

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 as part of the Ca-

nadian Furniture Show (transportation and accommodation to be provided).

As was done last year, the recipients were selected from four regions from coast to coast: 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 2019 RSP Awards winners will be introduced more fully on the pages that follow, but congratulations are warranted once again to: Amanda Mansfield of Hampton House Furniture in New Minas, Nova Scotia – Atlantic Region; Christina Lamont of Smitty's Fine Furniture in Kitchener, Ontario – Central Region; Jennifer Nelson of Leon's Furniture in Medicine Hat, Alberta – Western Region; and, Parry Gallagher of Coombs Junction Furniture in Coombs, British Columbia – Pacific Region.

Jennifer Nelson was also named Canada's *Retail Sales Professional of the Year* for 2019.

Each is profiled by HGO contributing editor Ashley Newport on the pages that follow. The photos taken during the Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala are the work of Bruce Gibson of Bruce Gibson Photography, Toronto, and are published courtesy of the Canadian Home Furnishings Alliance.

Ashley also interviewed each RSP Award recipient during this year's Canadian Furniture Show for HGO.tv (<https://www.homegoodsonline.ca/video.php>).

This year's judging panel included: David Cohn, national sales director for ZucoraHome; John Power, general manager of sales and strategic development for Mega Group; Raffaele Laserra, assistant vice president of home furnishings for Cantrex Nationwide; and, Corrie-Ann Knell, HGO director of sales and marketing.

The recipients of the RSP 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.

The RSP Awards program is also supported by the Canadian Home Furnishings Alliance as well as by the Quebec Furniture Manufacturers Association, organisers of the Canadian Furniture Show. The program also maintains a web site at [www.RSPAwards.com](http://www.RSPAwards.com).

The call for entries for the 2020 *Retail Sales Professional Awards* will be made shortly by *Home Goods Online*, which extends its congratulations to the winning class of 2019. Our industry's future is indeed safe in their hands. ►

# CELEBRATING SUCCESS

*“Selling is essentially a transference of feelings.” – Zig Ziglar*

BY BRAD GEDDES

**R**ECOGNISING AND CELEBRATING those individuals who create customers has become an important annual tradition in the home furnishings industry with a record number of nominations having been received for the third annual *Retail Sales Professional Awards* which closed earlier this year and celebrated at the Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala.

The importance of professional salespeople cannot be underestimated in today's highly competitive retail environment. It's their ability to understand the needs of customers (who have unlimited choice) that is the hallmark of a salesperson's success. Professional salespeople connect with their customers, quickly assess their needs and then find and present the right solution – all with passion, enthusiasm and humble gratitude for the opportunity to help.

The *Retail Sales Professional Awards* is our industry's opportunity to recognise those individuals that contribute to our collective success. Simply being nominated means an individual has been recognized by their peers, industry participants or their manager for the important work they do every day.

Selling home furnishings is not for the timid. As Zig Ziglar was known to say, “Timid salespeople have skinny kids.”

When we examine the background of RSP Award nominees, we find professionals who are passionate about what they do, who believe in helping others and are driven to achieve success. In many cases, nominees have been doing this important work for decades but still remain open to learning how to improve. When you read the profiles of this year's recipients you will understand why these outstanding individuals were selected for special recognition.

This year's recipients, selected from each region of Canada, were chosen because of their unique individual accomplishments. We are thankful for this year's judging panel - consist-



ing of John Power, general manager of sales and strategic development for Mega Group; Corrie-Ann Knell, director of sales and marketing for *Home Goods Online*; Rafelle Laserra, assistant vice president of home furnishings for Cantrex Nationwide and David Cohn, director of national sales for ZucoraHome – who faced a challenge selecting the RSP Award recipients from so many qualified individuals.

We are also appreciative of the support provided by our communications sponsor, *Home Goods Online*, together with industry support from the Canadian Furniture Show and the Canadian Home Furnishings Alliance.

ZucoraHome is proud to have participated as the presenting sponsor for this important recognition event and we join in celebrating the success that each worthy recipient has achieved in being recognized as a recipient of the 2019 *Retail Sales Professional Awards*!

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BRADFORD 'BRAD' GEDDES is the president and chief executive officer of ZurcoraHome, the home service plan provider based in London, Ontario, and Presenting Sponsor of the Retail Sales Professional Awards (RSPA). ►

# MAKING CUSTOMERS HAPPY

*Having the knowledge to help the customer make the best buying decision is the key to sending her away from the store happy. It also helps if you love what you sell and have a willingness to do everything that needs doing every day. That best describes this RSP Award honouree.*

**F**EW THINK HE OR SHE WILL END UP A SALES associate, let alone an incredibly successful one. Sales can be challenging, not to mention stressful at the best of times, but it's particularly difficult when one's industry is working hard to grapple with evolving customer needs and major technological disruptions. But for some, the calling can't be denied – especially when he is selling something everyone needs: furniture.

Parry Gallagher, the soft-spoken and friendly owner Coombs Junction Furniture, not only loves the industry he's been proud to be a part of for three decades, but he's also happiest when serving who walk through the door of his Vancouver Island store. That's why he selected as this year's *Retail Sales Professional Award* recipient for the Pacific Region, which covers British Columbia.

"I've been in the business over 30 years and I've owned my furniture store for the past ten and I love it here," he told HGO in an interview after he was feted at the Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala this past May, who was quick to add he loves what he does for the simple reason he gets to meet incredible people. "I love the people and making them happy with the goods and services that we offer. It's mainly all about the customer. It makes me happy to help them."

Gallagher also said he was honoured and humbled by the recognition. "I felt honoured to be recognized by my peers in the furniture industry," he says.

It was Gallagher's people-oriented approach that prompted Scott McEachern, a sales representative for ZucoraHome – the award's Presenting Sponsor – to nominate him. "I nominated Parry because of his dedication to his business, his employees and especially his family. No one in the industry works harder on those three categories than Parry. I was so happy to hear that Parry had won. He deserved it," McEachern said.

"Parry is a 'one man' show," his nomination reads. "Living in a small community, Parry is responsible for everything, display, sales, delivery, after sales service, and most of all, he does this seven days a week. What you don't know is that his wife has been very ill for the past couple of years, in and out of hospital but Parry never missed a day of work, and he saw his wife everyday as well. She is doing much

better now. This little store does just shy of one million dollars a year, all because of Parry, who cares about everyone."

While most sales associates do their best to make the customer's experience perfect, Gallagher works hard to ensure his clients benefit from their time in the store – which is located in the small town of Coombs, on the eastern shore of Vancouver Island, just north of Nanaimo – and walk away with the perfect piece of furniture.

"We make the buying experience a good one by having the knowledge to help the customer make the best buying decision," he says. "I think it's very important. It's all about making customers happy and providing the best customer service."

A good, fruitful buying experience doesn't just make the customer happy in the moment – it encourages them to tell friends and family about their experience, therefore creating more clientele.

Gallagher works to provide a good experience by listening carefully to what the customer wants and needs. "I'm listening to what they need to suit their needs. I'm providing a good buying experience and showing them the best buys and how they can benefit the best from the products that we sell."

His company offers locally sourced products, which he believes keeps customers coming through the door. "Our products are all mostly Canadian and B.C. made – 90% of our products are made in Canada and 75% of what we carry is made right here in B.C.," he says. "It's a valuable asset and the customers love it."

It also helps he loves the product he sells just as much his customers. "I also love B.C. made products because they're such good quality and everybody benefits from that."

Life outside the store consists of family, sports and walks on the beach (in precisely that order, according to McEachern). His advice for the budding sales associate is straightforward. "Treat your customers really well and give them the best customer service possible. That will always reap the benefits in the end."

Gallagher isn't done yet, saying, "I hope to continue to grow a successful business and be a leader in the community. I would like to stay in the business until I am ready to retire." ►



PARRY GALLAGHER



# SHOPPING IS MEANT TO BE FUN

*Some people gravitate towards stability and routine, while others such as this award winner thrive when every day and every person, they encounter is a little bit different.*

FOR MANY, SHOPPING FOR A COMMODITY IS A chore, something to be done rather than something to look forward to. Since it's not always easy to make shopping for a new sofa exciting, it's commendable when the sales associate thrives because she reminds the customer of one important fact: shopping for furniture is always supposed to be fun.

Christina Lamont of Smitty's Fine Furniture was named the *Retail Sales Professional Award* recipient for the Central Region (Ontario and Quebec) because she makes customers feel like they're doing something fun and special: making their home more functional and beautiful.

Lamont was nominated by Lani Lorenz, a sales manager with Smitty's, a family-owned retailer with stores in Hanover and Kitchener, Ontario.

"Christina has a special way with every customer she greets and works with," is how she's described in her RSP Award nomination. "She is very 'down to earth' and 'tells it like it is'. Customers love her, respect her and only want to work with her. She is extremely talented at merchandising our showrooms to make each room grouping look its best. Christina has done many complete homes for all furnishings and accessories.

"In the five years Christina has continued each year to achieve higher sales to become our top salesperson for the past two years," it continues. "This past year, she was top sales as well. Christina's goal for 2019 is to be a million-dollar sales achiever."

Lamont was surprised and flattered to find she had won and says she thrives in an environment where every day promises something new. "Every day is different. Everybody comes in with a new need and you get to research and help them find the right products," she told HGO in an interview. "It's great to look forward to work every day because you are meeting new people and helping them create their dream spaces."

Lamont works to create a stress-free environment for shoppers as soon as they walk in the door. "I usually just try to greet them and let them know that shopping is supposed to be fun and there's no need to stress about it. I tell them to just come on in and try things out and we'll see what works."

Customers will often share a great shopping experi-

ence with family and friends, which helps her grow the clientele. "Stay friendly and they'll come back. After their furniture is delivered and they're sitting with their friends and family, it usually comes up how, you know, somebody might have helped them out and hopefully, that family member will come in and shop at the store."

Lamont listens carefully to what they want to guide them to the pieces that will best suit their needs. The job, she sug-

gests, often involves some problem-solving skills. "I'm usually listening to the problem so I can help find a solution because they're in the store because they don't know what the solution is. I can help guide them and help them find something, and even if we need to create it from scratch, that's something that we will take the time to do."

Lamont believes personality is important. "Listening skills, a little bit of humour and consistency is important," she says. "Just know that you're going to learn something new every single day."

She's also passionate about mattresses. "I think everybody should be sleeping on a really good mattress. Customers invest in something for themselves and it's going to help them feel great about themselves or might even help heal something. A good mattress is going to help them feel good for the rest of their day."

Lamont feels good when her customer feels good – especially if that good feeling lasts long after the sale is over. "It just helps me feel helpful to somebody else in the world."

When she isn't at work, Lamont loves to explore the world. "I love to travel when I can, whether it is camping along Lake Huron or heading somewhere warm in the winter, such as Jamaica or the Dominican Republic."

The best part of her job – aside from helping customers – is feeling part of a family. "I like that Smitty's is family owned and operated. Everyone that works here works like a team and we care about what we do," she says.

Her advice for the budding sales associate is a friendly and easygoing attitude will go a long way. "I would say you have to be a good people person and just roll with it. Everybody has different personalities and hopefully, they'll like yours as well and you can connect with them on a personal level and help them with their furniture while they're there." ▶



CHRISTINA  
LAMONT

## ATLANTIC REGION:

# AN EAST COAST STANDOUT

*Any furniture retailer or sales associate knows the customer's tastes and needs change from coast to coast across this country. The key to success for this RSP recipient is product knowledge with a desire to make a personal connection.*

**I**N ATLANTIC CANADA, LIFE MOVES A SLOWER PACE and shoppers tend to seek out for retailers who feel more like family (or at the very least, a close friend). Fortunately, those frequenting Hampton House Furniture, in New Minns, Nova Scotia, Amanda Mansfield – a chatty and engaging sales associate who is proud to represent the store – has a lot to offer customers looking for a more personal connection.

After meeting and talking with her in person it's easy to see why she was a shoo-in for the *Retail Sales Professional Awards* despite the fact she's only been on the floor for a little over three years. She is the 2019 recipient for the Atlantic Region.

"Hampton House Furniture is a family run business and we're a small team, but we love what we do," she enthused during a recent interview with *Home Goods Online*. "They nominated me for this award and I'm super excited."

It's clear from the outset she's passionate about her career. "I would have to say I love everything [about my job]. From coming in the morning to my co-workers to just a really great atmosphere," she says.

"It's a family run business and once you are hired, you feel like part of the family. Hampton House puts customer service first in all things and we really do enjoy working with one another. Our customers also feel that vibe and in turn, many of them feel like family when they come through the door."

Mansfield's team was happy to see her walk away with the award.

"It was a great pleasure to have nominated Amanda for the RSP Award. Hampton House Furniture is incredibly fortunate to have Amanda as a furniture sales associate," says Anton Varner, president of the single-unit Hampton House Furniture.

"Her customer service skills are exemplary. Amanda takes initiative to figure out and learn about new products when they arrive in the showroom and has unquestionably become the 'go-to' person for anything regarding product information," he continues, adding, "She is one of the friendliest people we know and always arrives with a smile and an eagerness to assist her clients in making informed furniture choices. Her natural charm and wit make everyone who visits Hampton House become at ease and they leave feeling like they just made a new friend."

Mansfield is a pleasantly gregarious salesperson who immediately engages with everyone she meets, expressing genuine interest in their lives and making them feel at home. She's also

dedicated to helping people find what it is they're looking for as soon as they walk into the store. "I really enjoy helping customers figure out exactly what they want and giving it to them. Our store is very large, so people can get a bit overwhelmed when they come in," she says. "I really love being that person who is able to kind of narrow it down for them and help them find exactly what they want."

This point was stressed in her nomination for the RSP

Award. "Amanda is one of the most enthusiastic individuals that this retailer has employed over the past 10 years. She is genuinely interested in helping people solve their interior design dilemmas. She is also extremely self motivated and is constantly learning about the products that she sells," her advocate said.

Mansfield says it's easier to connect with people in Atlantic Canada as the community is smaller and tighter-knit – and everyone is interested in everyone else's background.

"Everyone in Nova Scotia's provincial pastime is just trying to find out they're related to each other," she says. "So, I try to keep that feeling throughout the whole experience with my customer. It's not so much that I'm a salesperson and they're my customer, it's about making that connection, and that way when we start to get down to the nitty-gritty of it, it's not me selling to them."

Fortunately for the store, stories about good experiences travel fast. "There's a lot of word of mouth in Nova Scotia because it is such a small-knit community, and it's also just about being true to your word. I send a lot of Christmas cards to our customers," she says.

When a customer first walks through the door, Mansfield starts off by engaging them in conversation. "A lot of times we start by talking just about pretty much anything. We start making that connection and their guard comes down a little bit. We start talking about what they're looking for and once they start talking about their lives, you learn more about what they need."

Mansfield says when customers mention key facts, such as whether they have children or pets, it's easier to find pieces that are perfect for their households. "I just really listen for those little things that give you an idea of the feel of the room and the vibe that they want," she says.

Mansfield also offers incredible product knowledge as she often labels the products that go onto the floor. "I do a lot of the pricing and labelling, so I'm constantly flipping through work-

**[Amanda Mansfield continued on page 15] ▶**



## WESTERN REGION: KEEP SMILING

*Canada's Retail Sales Professional for 2019 wasn't originally hired to work on the floor, but her love of people and design led her to a successful career, one she doesn't plan to give up anytime soon.*

WHILE MANY THRIVE IN SALES, IT'S NOT AN ideal career for just anyone. The perfect sales associate must be personable, approachable and, above all else, knowledgeable. That's why, it's incredibly impressive when someone not only thrives in a challenging and fast-paced environment but goes on to be recognised for their years of service to one of the biggest retailers in Canada.

Jennifer Nelson, the sales manager at the Leon's Furniture franchise in Medicine Hat, Alberta, combines her love of helping people find their perfect piece with her love of design – and her passion shows, which prompted the judges to select her as the *Retail Sales Professional Award* recipient for the Western Region (including Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, The Yukon, North West Territories and Nunavut). So impressed were they, she was also named Canada's Retail Sales Professional for 2019.

In an interview with HGO, held during the recent Canadian Furniture Show, Nelson revealed a career in sales wasn't something she planned for. "I've been at Leon's for 16 years and I started as a part-time employee in the office and now I'm the sales manager."

Her career trajectory changed when she decided to challenge herself on the sales floor and ended up thriving in the role. "Watching the sales staff piqued my interest and I thought 'I could do that' and I asked if I could try it. My manager put me out on the floor, and I was on from 12 p.m. until 5 p.m. and I did really well, so he said to train up," she says.

Nelson loves to indulge two of her primarily passions: people and decor. "I love people and seeing different people all the time because everybody's unique, and I also love home decor and decorating."

She's been passionate about and involved in decorating for at least the past 12 years. Nelson participates in Medicine Hat's *Parade of Homes* event, an initiative launched in 2008 to showcase the abilities of local builders to the community.

"Contractors that purchase appliances from us have an event called *Parade of Homes* that involves 10 or more contractors that build houses and invite customers to walk through the houses. I go in and decorate and accessorise the houses," says Nelson, who also decorated the lottery homes sold by the local Kinsmen club.

Her customers also come to her for design advice. "I've had customers invite me to their house and I'll give them suggestions."

Her love for what she does was what inspired Shauna Schlamp, a manufacturer's sales representative with the Calgary-based Westbridge Group, to nominate her for the RSP Award.

"I always look forward to meeting with Jennifer. She is enthusiastic, warm and authentic. With 16 years of sales experience at Leon's, Jennifer leads the sales team to successfully achieve their goals," she told HGO. "As a mentor and role

model, Jennifer has earned respect from her team. She brings her experience and skill set to the customer experience; she connects with people and listens. She's an experienced and accomplished retail sales professional."

"She is knowledgeable, keeps current with industry trends and yet, is always eager to learn," her nomination reads. "Jennifer brings this skill set to the customer experience; she connects with people and listens. She is conscientious and driven to provide the best experience and best service to her customers, while maintaining a

commitment to continual improvement."

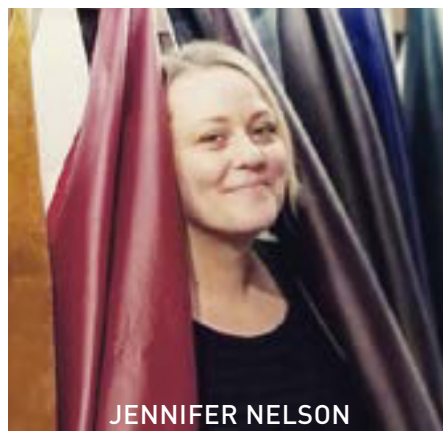
Nelson was humbled by the recognition, which she was given at the recent Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala. "I was excited. I was honoured and scared at the same time because I was nervous to travel by myself. I kind of expected it because Shauna nominated me the year before and I won and couldn't go, so I had to turn it down. She asked me if she could nominate me again. With the national award, I was so nervous, but so honoured too."

Nelson says customer service is all about making the shopper feel welcome and acknowledged. "I try to build a rapport with my customer by trying to figure out who they are as a person, making them feel like a family member or friend. It's about making that personal connection."

The approach not only pleases the customer, but also grows the store's clientele. "I build my clientele mostly on my personality and word-of-mouth," she says, adding, "When you have a great experience and a great interaction with the customer, they tend to tell people about that experience."

The personable approach goes a long way in a community such as Medicine Hat, which is in southern Alberta on the TransCanada Highway between Calgary and Regina.

"For a small city, word of mouth is a huge thing. When a customer comes in, I try to talk about the weather or if they have children. In fact, we give balloons to children try to ►



JENNIFER NELSON



break down that wall. Kids love balloons, so the gesture makes parents a lot happier, so they give you information that you need to point them in the right direction," she says.

Nelson believes it's crucially important to guide the customer because most rely on salespeople to help find what they're looking for – especially when they're not sure what kind of piece will work in their home. "When a lot of people come in, they sometimes really do not know what they're looking for. They'll say they need a new couch or chair and then you take it upon yourself to find out what they need. It's all about finding what they want, where it's going, how big their space is and so on."

While she's happy in her work, Nelson also credits the store she works for – a member of the 36-unit franchise network operated by Leon's Furniture Limited, this country's largest full-line furniture retailer – offers an incredible sense of community.

"My job is different every day and I love the people I work with," she enthuses. "The company is a franchise, but the thing I like about the store is that we're a little family. We can go to each other and talk about personal stuff. It's not like a big store where you go to work and go home. All our warehouse guys have been there for over 10 years (or close to it). One salesperson was here for 21 years."

Off the clock, Nelson likes to relax and spend time with her 13-year-old daughter, who also has a bit of a creative streak. "She was just telling me that she wants to design and decorate houses for a living," she says.

She also makes time for herself when she can. "I enjoy hanging out with family and friends and golfing. I'm often working though," she says while laughing.

Nelson also wants to expand her creative horizons. "I want to be better at my job and learn every day and make the business more successful, but my dream is to open my own wedding store."

For the time being though, she has no plans to leave the industry and has some advice for budding sales associate. "The biggest advice is never to stop learning because even if you think you're at the top of your game, you can always learn something new."

She also believes a professional sales associate should be both pleasant and determined. "You have to have motivation, determination and always be smiling."

*[Amanda Mansfield continued from page 13]*

books and I always see what's new and what's coming. Even if we don't have something on the floor, it might be tucked away in the back of my mind. So, when someone comes in wanting something a little bit different, I can show them a picture get it in."

She also believes the products also speak for themselves. "About 90% of our stores' products are made in Canada and I just love being able to say that with confidence. It's not that it's just assembled in Canada, it's made here. People really love that."

Outside the store, Mansfield likes to keep active – and introduce people to Nova Scotia's wineries. "I enjoy running and playing tennis. I also love to knit and my husband and I both love to cook and entertain. I also work as a tour guide on the Wolfville Magic Winery Bus which allows me to combine my love of talking to people and my pride for the place I live."

As for what's next, Mansfield hopes the industry will present even more opportunities. "I have loved working in the furniture business," she says. "I have always wanted to be my own boss so I am excited to see what future opportunities there are that may allow me to achieve this dream within this industry."

## MEET THE JURY

**E**VALUATING THE NOMINATIONS RECEIVED FOR THE 2019 Retail Sales Professional Awards was entrusted to four veterans from across this country's furniture and home furnishings industry. They included David Cohn, national sales director for ZucoraHome; John Power, general manager of sales and strategic development for Mega Group; Raffaele Laserra, assistant vice president of home furnishings for Cantrex Nationwide; and, Corrie-Ann Knell, HGO director of sales and marketing.

*Home Goods Online* asked each member of the panel to offer his or her insight into the program. Here's what they had to say:

### DAVID COHN

I am a huge believer in the RSP Awards and would like to see it grow. For this to happen we need to create more interest from the retailers and get them excited. This is a huge opportunity for them to get additional (free) publicity while honouring their sales associates.



In order to achieve this, we need to make the questionnaire as simple and easy as possible. The questions should be more direct and driven towards what the associate is capable of and not how good they are and what sales they achieved. More like what makes them special and why they stand out.

The winners were extremely happy and appreciative of what was happening and how they were treated. The store owners were excited and proud. This event was the highlight of the evening (the Canadian Home Furnishings Award gala, where the 2019 recipients were introduced to the industry). ▶

## CORRIE-ANN KNELL

Being a judge for the RSP Awards is rewarding. It is wonderful to be a part of our industry that recognises the people who deserve it the most.



Without retail sales professionals, business just wouldn't get done.

I really enjoy reading the nomination forms – you can almost feel the enthusiasm for these people come right off the page. And now that nominations keep

growing year by year, it gets harder to choose the recipients – they are all so deserving.

I would like to see the RSP Awards continue to grow. I think with the help of our community it could be really something – something even more prestigious and meaningful to everyone.

So, if you are an owner or manager who hasn't participated – make a nomination this year or find out how you can support the program.

## RAFFAELE LASERRA

We were very pleased to see an increase in the number of submissions in 2019. We are starting to see more and more retailers participating in



this event. It's great to see so many of them looking to honour their employees for all their hard work.

I was very impressed with the quality of the submissions. It was a cast of experienced and knowledgeable sales associates.

Any of the three finalists could have easily won this award. The common trait they shared was their passion for their job. It's what jumped out at me the most when going through the selection process. It's great to see these candidates get put on a stage and get recognised for their commitment and expertise in a field that demands constant self-motivation.

If you've worked in this field, you know how challenging it can be for a sales associate. Often, a sales associate has to overcome several stereotypes before even speaking to a customer. A

customer does not always want to be approached while he or she is shopping, and the associate must find a way to break down that barrier. They don't get enough credit for what they do.

Hopefully we'll continue to see this award be celebrated and supported by our industry for years to come. By the looks of things, we're on the right track. I'm looking forward to another remarkable event in 2020.

## JOHN POWER

As in many situations the frontline employees; the heart and soul of an organisation goes too often unrecognised. The daily work and effort our



retail associates do to support the consumer in their path to purchase is one of the most difficult and unsung positions in our industry.

Mega Group's number one goal has always been to help make independent retailer's

stronger, and businesses are only as strong and successful as the people within the organisation. So, it stands to reason acknowledging the people representing the business to the end consumer is an admirable initiative which we are proud to be a part of.

The RSP Awards is an important beginning in recognising these frontline people. For years, the Canadian Home Furnishing Alliance (CHFA) and other industry associations have attempted to develop a program like what was launched three years ago.

Each year I know the regional and national winners are excited and thankful for their industry acknowledgment and for the camaraderie that is developed amongst their peers. With over 14,000 retail locations and more than 60,000 sales associates across Canada being chosen to represent your region is an honour they should be proud of.

The RSP Award, in concert with the Retailer of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards, rounds out a positive evening of industry recognition honouring the major facets of our industry. As a people-oriented business we can never forget they are at the base of everything we do. When ever and wherever we can pause and acknowledge their efforts, Mega Group and I will be there in support. **HGO**

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** John Power is also a member of the CHFA board of directors and is chairman of the alliance's events committee, which organises its Retailer of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards program.



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Canada's only national furniture trade event was a pared-down affair, but attending buyers and exhibitors are confident the moved-up to January 2020 edition will recapture much of the excitement experienced in previous years.

**BY ASHLEY NEWPORT**

An homage to mid-century modern styling, Downtown is the latest collection from casual dining powerhouse Canadel.



# Optimism reigned supreme

**T**HE CANADIAN FURNITURE SHOW (CFS), this country's only national furniture trade event has had its ups and downs over the past few years but attending industry professionals – and exhibiting resources – seem to firmly believe it is set to evolve once again by returning to its roots as the first such happening of the year beginning just a few months from now.

The 2019 edition was certainly a more slender affair than attendees are used to. Held as always at the International Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, it boasted a little over 130 exhibitors, which included such stalwarts as Brentwood Classics, Collection Tuff Avenue, Crate Designs, Dynasty Furniture, Julien Beaudoin, and Superstyle Furniture, among others. And while the more petit show may have been was light on display booths, it proved to be heavy on style.

Stylish offerings aside, the weekend-long show did underwhelm in some respects. While some attendees might have appreciated having less ground to cover, others missed the star-studded talks and workshops that make the event a little glitzier (designers and television personalities Steven Sabados and Sarah Richardson have both appeared at CFS in recent years).

But despite the more limited selection of vendors and lack of star power – which can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that the next show will take place a few short months from now in January 2020 – buyers and exhibitors alike seemed optimistic the show's return to its more traditional winter time slot will mean more vendors, a larger array of solid product offerings and better energy.

## WHAT DID BUYERS THINK?

Measuring the success of a show usually involves gauging the reactions of buyers. If retailers and designers place a good number of orders for on-trend products, the show has done its job. This year, buyers seemed pleased by

what they did see – even though there was less of a selection to peruse.

“We’re seeing fabulous looking product and we always enjoy seeing the very latest in colour and decor, but there’s less of it,” says Lani Lorenz, sales manager for Smitty’s Fine Furniture, an independent two-unit furniture retailer based in Hanover, Ontario.

Lorenz was particularly struck by the presentations put forward by solid wood case goods specialist Durham Furniture and contemporary metal furniture maker Amisco, calling them both show standouts. ▶



Top: Kicking off the 2019 Canadian Furniture Show was the annual Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala. Here Daniel Walker (left), president of upholstery maker Jaymar Furniture, is seen accepting this year's Lifetime Achievement Award from CHFA board member and event committee chairman John Power.



Bottom: Paul Hogeboom (left) and Heather Hogeboom, the owner-operators of some 12 La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries in and around the Greater Toronto Area were the recipients of this year's Retailer of the Year Award from the Canadian Home Furnishings Alliances. Presenting them with the award is association chairman Mark Wiltshire.





The Meridien bed from Amisco is offered in 14 metal colours as well as full, queen and king sizes.

The headboard cushion is available in leather as well as 70 fabrics.

***“We’re always satisfied with the products that we sell, and that’s our Canadian-made pieces. So of course, what we’ve seen is beautiful, it’s great to see something new.”***

“We’re always satisfied with the products that we sell, and that’s our Canadian-made pieces. So of course, what we’ve seen is beautiful, it’s great to see something new,” she noted.

When asked about the upcoming switch to January shows, Lorenz is optimistic the show will fare well. “I’m looking forward to it being back in January when it’ll be full and we’ll be seeing everything for the year coming up. Sometimes the show has speakers, but we don’t really have time to go to that. We’re always looking for the latest decorating trends.”

Other buyers agreed those vendors who exhibited at CFS 2019 brought worthwhile and attractive products with them.

“We think that there are some really nice and interesting pieces of furniture,” says Lynn McMillan, an interior designer and owner of Gem Home Staging and Designs, based in St. Catharines, Ontario. “For me, this is furniture that I’ve seen before, but I’m looking for something that’s more current [and the selection is] pretty good. We look for manufacturers or companies in Toronto because we’re in Niagara, so it does it make it easier for us to come by and pick up what we’re looking for.”

McMillan said that she and her team were hunting for trendier pieces and are planning to visit other shows throughout the year, including

the Las Vegas Market, which will be held at the end of July. And while she hadn’t been at CFS for long at interview time, she was excited to evaluate the more stylish pieces on offer.

“We’re looking for more current stuff, which is why we’re here – to see what’s up and coming and what’s out there now instead of buying stuff that’s been around for a few years.”

Buyers representing Lowe’s Canada, which has become a more aggressive player in furniture, home furnishings and major appliances in recent years, were also on the hunt for new products.

“We’re looking for new opportunities, new products, new trends,” Gabrielle Gingras, the retailer’s director of online exclusive central merchandising, told *Home Goods Online*. “We do the e-commerce business, so we’re not limited to what’s in the store,” her colleague Melanie Szaban, assistant online category manager, added. “We have more space to put much more product on, so we’re trying to be a little more unique than the rest of the market. We’re trying to be more trendy and fashion-forward.”

Both Gingras and Szaban were pleased with what they saw on the show floor.

“There’s a lot of interesting product for us that we have seen here. A lot of home décor is here too. Of course, it’s a furniture show but ►





we see that the vendors have a lot of additional products like rugs, so that's interesting," says Gingras, adding she immediately saw potential after walking into the show early on the first day.

Szaban noted the show is unique in the sense that most of the products on display are locally sourced and sold by local vendors. Gingras added proximity is important, as Lowe's Canada is a Canadian company that's looking for local products within the country.

"Being able to see everything in one area at one time, instead of piecemeal, is good," says Szaban.

Gingras, who was attending CFS for the second year in a row, said more of a selection is always a plus.

"Bigger is better," she says. "In January, we can have more vendors and do more days. If the show gets bigger, we'll be looking at extending the number of days we're here."

Other buyers were also pleased to find strong displays and an enticing selection, the size of the show notwithstanding.

"My experience at the CFS was good, like every show we go to, whether it's Toronto or Vegas, there is always something we can take away from it," noted Matt Fecho, who manages the Airdrie, Alberta location of the 23-unit sleep specialist Mattress Mattress, which has stores throughout Alberta and British Columbia.

Fecho, who's also a member of the retailer's

senior management team, said some booths offered standout products.

"The booths that really stood out for us were the Beaudoin booth, the MLily Booth and the Blu Sleep booth. Beaudoin had a nice sized booth with great samples of complete beds, headboards and adjustable bases. MLily had a nice showing of pillows and mattresses," he says. "As we carry some of their product it is always nice to check in and see the new innovations. When it comes to Blu Sleep, this was a new booth to us that we had not previously seen. The pillows definitely stood out here."

When asked what the show could improve on, Fecho said the question was a difficult one to answer – especially since many of Mattress Mattress' main suppliers have transitioned to factory showrooms that are, more often than not, found on the west coast. That said, he suggested it could benefit from more talks and appearances.

"Maybe there is an opportunity to incorporate seminars or more speakers that are not part of the gala."

## WHAT DID EXHIBITORS THINK?

While CFS 2019 was undeniably smaller than previous shows, many major exhibitors returned to showcase the latest in mattresses, case goods and home décor (one vendor even specialised in self and haircare products, which was unique).

Although it's safe to assume some of the ►

Made in India from Mango wood, the Shabby Chic media console was introduced by Gest'Art Furniture.



Made of teak, this free form root console table is from LH Imports. Each piece varies in size and shape. Seen here with the Bolton club chair.

usual vendors chose to sit the show out and wait for January, others saw the last spring show as an opportunity to display new product and network with other industry insiders.

"It's the fourth time we are here and we had the chance this year to have a prime spot," says Elie Bendavid, sourcing and trading manager with the Montreal-based Gest Art Furniture, which specialises in providing handmade furniture to retailers, designers and developers for residential and commercial buildings.

"We are very happy because we have a lot of people coming through and we are very well located. I think our products are very trendy and we've been getting a good reaction from people who come by," she said, adding she believes buyers are still looking for natural wood, even though the show seemed to be just as heavy – if not more so – on sleeker glass and mirrored pieces.

"People are very interested in a natural product with natural colour. Thick wood and metals are very popular because the real stuff is very popular. We have some new customers and we are taking new orders," she says.

Other exhibitors reported it wasn't as quiet or as poorly attended as they expected in the weeks leading up to the three-day event.

"I was actually surprised because I thought it'd be a little slower but it's been pretty strong for us, at lunchtime it was packed in here," said Phil Pinsky, director of sales for Renwil, the Montreal-based wall art, home décor and decorative accessories resource that operates a permanent showroom in the International Centre.

Pinsky also noted buyer tastes and wants tend to vary by region. "It's so regional. Winnipeg is going to be different than Montreal and Montreal is going to be different than Vancouver and Vancouver will be different from Toronto. People are always looking for the specific look that's going to be hot in their own market, so it's a real challenge for us to be able to offer something for the entirety of the U.S. and Canadian markets," he says.

"We have a creative director who does the trend projection and forecast for the next six months and we do our best to make sure that [what we have] is global enough that it can encapsulate the whole marketplace."

That said, Pinsky did confirm that marble appears to be trending across the board. "Marble is big and what's in right now is what we're calling honest materials. We sit in front of computers and we tap away on plastic keys and we look at silicon all day. So, what's enticing as a luxury item is an honest material such as brass, stone, marble or granite."

Pinsky said the thirst for natural materials makes sense when you think about the ongoing fascination with other seemingly archaic products.

"At the turn of the century, the incandescent bulb came out and everyone thought that candles would just disappear, but instead they went from being a commodity good to a luxury good. We don't need candles, but we want them because they make us feel good. You want to feel the wood grain. You want to see it. You want to see the real stone."

As for what else was driving traffic to Renwil, Pinsky said the company's extensive collection of wall art and mirrors often resonates with buyers.

"People [enjoy] the art because it's always the most colourful and vibrant thing. People looking for mirrors always come here. It's one of our strongest categories. Pillows have done incredibly well for us and accent furniture is picking up a lot of steam."

As for the pared-down show, Pinsky said he was pleasantly surprised by the energy. "[The show] has kind of beat my expectations a little bit. I felt some optimism on the floor while chatting with people. They said there wasn't as much, but they liked what they were seeing."

When asked whether the show will do better in the winter come 2020, Pinsky said the move back to the colder months makes sense.

"I think it makes more sense than having it in May because May is right in the middle of the season. So people kind of feel like they just saw the same products in January. No one's really launching anything new and the next launch ►

# SHOWCASE SPOTLIGHTS EIGHT TRENDS

The centrepiece of this year's Canadian Furniture Show was the second edition of The Trend Showcase. Created by interior designer Linda Mazur, it consisted of nine chic and stylish 'rooms' – vignettes, really – featuring compositions of handpicked items speaking to specific themes found amongst the product on display in the International Centre.

"We were approached by the show last year to do the trend showcase. As a small, independent retailer, you're always looking for different creative approaches where you can inspire people and stay on trend by making sure that what you're buying and what you're investing in is going to sell," Mazur, principal of the Toronto-based Linda Mazur Design Group, explains. "We took that perspective when we started designing for the trend showcase."

The tech-savvy Trend Showcase capitalised on eight specific trends, ranging from curvy designs; blush tones as neutral colours; bold high-contrasting patterns; textures (think velvet, macramé, neutral materials); lighter wood tones; multi-function furniture; bold hues; and, recycled and upcycled pieces.

Designed as part of a quaint little house (albeit a fairly open-concept one without a roof), each room was built with one of the eight aforementioned trends in mind. Each featured everything that could make up a modern home: curvy furniture, bold colours, cozy outdoor living pieces, brass lamps, textured wood, velvet sofas, vintage-looking rugs in soft pastels, botanical prints, a royal blue velvet dining set and more.

"We tried to sort of bring a little bit of everything into it. When we came up with the design, we thought of compartmentalising everything into vignettes and designing around that so that it's presented differently," says Mazur.

One space focused on modern retro pieces that harkened back to the 1970s – a time when curvy furniture was king. The room featured a sofa from LH Imports, armchairs from Modern Sensibility, a coffee table from Style in Form, an area rug from Rizzy Home and accessories by Renwil, Guild Design Gallery and Zuo Modern Canada.

Another area focused on outdoor living by framing yards and terraces as an extension of the home. The showcase featured an outdoor dining set by Drop Ship Vendor Group, a parasol by Nuline Distribution, woven armchairs by Turquoise Palace and side tables by Luce Lumen.

The vintage vibes space appeared in the form of an office. The room featured a desk, chair and wall shelving by LH Imports, a wall sconce by Luce Lumen and accessories by Renwil, Guild Design Gallery and Zuo.

The 'love your home' room was quite striking, celebrating the return of aubergine in furniture and design. The purple-



This room invites people to appreciate rich hues. This #texture themed space features a striking royal blue dining set with a dark wood table from Canadel, a stylish hexagon sideboard from LH Imports and a glamorous brass chandelier from Renwil.

hued room (which featured a lush velvet sofa), included a couch by A-Class Upholstery, an area rug by Rizzy Home, side tables and a floor lamp by Zuo and accessories by Renwil, Guild Design Gallery and Zuo.

Another area celebrated the colour green. Making its walls with a #greenwithenvy descriptor, the room showcased one of this year's hottest colours: dark green. The room included a dining table by Amisco Industries, a dining bench by Canadel, an area rug by Rizzy Home, a light fixture by Luce Lumen and accessories by Renwil, Guild Design Gallery and Zuo.

Another spot celebrated botanical prints – something seen recently in clothing design. With a #myhomevibe descriptor, the display showed how to bring a fresh, natural feel into the customer's home. The room included palm leaf cabinet by Guild Design, a chair by Turquoise Palace, a pendant light by Renwil and accessories by Renwil, Guild Design Gallery and Zuo.

The showcase also explored texture. Some spaces featured bolder pieces, with one room featuring a brilliant royal blue velvet dining set from Canadel, a hexagon sideboard by LH Imports, a brass chandelier by Renwil, an area rug by Rizzy Home and accessories by Renwil, Guild Design Gallery and Zuo.

Mazur noted CFS attendees come from all over the country and, therefore, have different tastes but most of the trends spotlighted in her presentation simply transcended borders. "It's all about warmth, it's all about nature. Everything is about being organic right now," she says. "You even see it in the vibe of furniture with the curvature. It's very easygoing and is very comfortable, and it's reminiscent of what was popular in the 70s and the 80s as well." ■





Left: Brynn is the latest upholstery group from Stylus Made to Order Sofas. In addition to the sofa, the group includes a loveseat, chair and ottoman.

Right: This classic casual dining set from Acme Chrome is part of metal specialist's Retro series.

is in August, which is not that far away. January makes a lot more sense to me.”

But while most people were optimistic the show will continue to attract buyers and provide opportunities for both local and international companies, others acknowledged some have more bad to say about the CFS than good.

That said, some cautioned industry insiders against dismissing what is, overall, an incredible networking opportunity.

Benoit Simard, chief executive officer of Mega Group – the Saskatoon-headquartered cooperatively own buying group with over 700 members across a number of home goods categories – firmly believes smaller retailers and manufacturers who choose not to participate in CFS will ultimately miss out on a number of potential business opportunities.

“Some people might not suffer much because they are big enough to have representatives on the road and they can participate in all the other shows, but there is a crowd in the middle,” he points out. “They will not have access to the crowd that only comes here. There will be people that will save money [by not exhibiting] this year, but they will likely not have as many customers coming down the pike.”

Benoit says the show has gotten smaller in recent years, but a lot of the pessimism surrounding the shrinking affair stems from the belief the show isn’t working as well.

“It essentially never stops going down and I really believe there is a self-fulfilling prophecy here. People say things are dying down and they make sure they don’t come and that makes it smaller.”

Simard also says shows aren’t just about the two or three days buyers are invited to browse product. They’re often (or should be) about the events held in conjunction with the show that work to educate retailers and manufacturers on a range of major trends (and disruptions) in the industry.

It’s incumbent on the organisers, he argues, to augment the show with workshops and presentations to make the event worth the busy retailer’s while. “If people have three to five days where they can be replaced at the store and they have the time to move, are they going to do a trip with the family or come to a show? That’s the big question. The show needs to have many reasons to exist. A show that’s just showing the product is the same old thing we had many years ago.”

Ultimately, Simard thinks the organisers need to do their best to ensure the show does go on.

“If you have the only Canadian show left in this country and you let it die, there will be a lot of suppliers who will not be able to expose what they do. There will be a lot of smaller retailers who will not be able to afford to shop the big shows, so they’ll be limited in what they can show, all while their end consumer can see the world of furniture online. I see that as a major issue. I don’t have a complete solution, but I try to influence people to continue making [this show] happen.”

The Canadian Furniture Show is owned and organised by the Quebec Furniture Manufacturers Association. Its next edition will be held at the International Centre in Mississauga, Ontario from January 16 to 18, 2020. **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.*

# CFS SALUTES BEST BOOTHS

All exhibitors at this year's Canadian Furniture Show (CFS) were automatically entered in the organiser's fourth annual Booth Awards program, whose goal is to salute excellence in the creation of inspiring displays featuring their product.

This year, a new four-member jury panel will evaluate the exhibits as they did last year, awarded winners in each of the following eight categories, including:

**BEST BOOTH:** best overall booth – a showstopper everyone would be talking about. This went to Style in Form, a furniture and décor resource based in Burnaby, British Columbia.

**BEST VISUAL DISPLAY:** given for the best visual display of either new or best-selling product. This went to the Ste-Pie, Quebec based glider rocker specialist Dutailier.

**BEST USE OF COLOUR:** given for the best use of colour to attract attention. This was a tie with the judges awarding the Consulate General of Indonesia and mattress and bedding accessory producer Mlily Canada.

**BEST USE OF SPACE:** was given to the booth that incorporates elements such as guest seating; refreshments zones; meeting tables; or charging stations that don't impede traffic flow or product display while having visual appeal. The winner here was metal furniture specialist Amisco.

**BEST NEW EXHIBITOR:** was given to the first-time exhibitor that went above and beyond to create an impactful, well displayed and well branded space. This was awarded to Almila Mobilya, a Turkish producer of youth and juvenile furniture.



Metal furniture specialist Amisco was cited by the judges for the 'Best Use of Space' during this year's booth awards.

**BEST DESIGN:** was given to the trendiest and most design-oriented booth. This year, Gest'Art, the Montreal-based resource specialising in unique, handmade furniture, was chosen.

**BEST TRAFFIC BUILDER:** was given to the exhibitor hosting an activity inside the booth used to drive traffic such as a contest, game, celebrity, performer, artist, virtual-reality experience, giveaway or educational component. The winner here was Mega Group, the Saskatoon-headquartered buying and marketing group.

**BEST INTERNATIONAL DESIGN CENTRE SHOWROOM:** this will be given to the 'must visit' permanent showroom located in the TIDC annex of the International Centre. This was awarded to Marcantonio Designs, the Toronto custom upholstery house.

The judging panel was comprised of members of the Toronto branch of the Decorators & Design Association of Canada (DDA), led by its president Maureen Weigen-Liebovitz, a designer who has a life-long passion for colour and textiles. The other members included Lindsey Foster von Kalben, a specialist in creating beautiful and functional spaces; Sharon MacIntosh, an accredited decorator who is the principal of her own company; and Lauren Kosowan, a designer known for a style that reflects timelessness, personality and functionality.

Providing the panel with a helping hand in the selection process were interior designer Gail Martiri; Pallavi Ram, a designer and communications director of the DDA; and Fay Splett, editor-in-chief of *Ontario Design* magazine. ■



Style in Form, a furniture and décor resource based in Burnaby, British Columbia was the recipient of the 'Best Booth' award at this year's Canadian Furniture Show.



# THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN



# AND



**BY DONALD  
COOPER**

They're not what you think they are, according to our resident retail guru, who has updated his thoughts on the subject. The two are often confused and rarely include the measurable commitments and specific calls to action businesses need if they are to remain relevant and profitable.



**T**HERE REMAINS GREAT CONFUSION about the differences between Vision and Mission when it comes to effective business planning. Many businesses spend years and thousands of dollars on consultants and strategic retreats only to come up with a vague, airy-fairy *Vision Statement* not worth the paper it's written on. Then, they proudly display it in the lobby and on their website for all to see.

It usually looks something like the chart seen on this page.

These typical aspirational Visions state nothing quantifiable or measurable; there is no timeline, so no sense of urgency; there's no call to action, no clear commitments; and, no accountability. They might as well hang a picture of their smiling grandmother on the wall.

## OUR VISION

The common belief is our Vision is our 'dream' of what we want to become. But, in truth, our Vision needs to be a combination of what the organisation wants to become (the dream) and the reality of what it must become to be a profitable and responsible market leader in the next three to five years. And, if what it wants to become and what it must become look nothing alike, there are some tough decisions to make. These are generally called exit strategies.

Our Vision will consist of six points on one piece of paper and it will be updated each year to keep it, and us, current and relevant. This Vision leads to clarity, commitment, specific action and to urgency and accountability.

Our Vision is not a 'Statement of Purpose' or a 'Statement of Values' – both are needed, but neither are Vision or Mission. Most businesses get this one wrong. The purpose of our Vision is to inform, focus, challenge and inspire everyone on our team – from top to bottom – about what the business commits to become. This operational Vision will be clear, simple and understandable by everyone. Any Vision not doing that is missing the point.

A proper business Vision will talk about commitments. Most businesses talk about goals, targets, aims and objectives. That's a big mistake. They have sales targets, profit objectives, customer satisfaction goals and they aim to do this and strive to do that.

## OUR VISION

We love our customers.

We honor the diversity  
of our staff.

God is a nice person.

The planet's a great place  
to hang around.

We'll work hard and have fun.

– The Management

The problem is the words goals targets, aims and objectives leave way too much wiggle room for your staff not to perform. Those weak, wishy-washy words should be replaced with one powerful word: commitments. We need to stop aiming and start committing.

There's a huge difference between a target and a commitment. A target is something we hit sometimes and miss other times and it's okay because it's just a target.

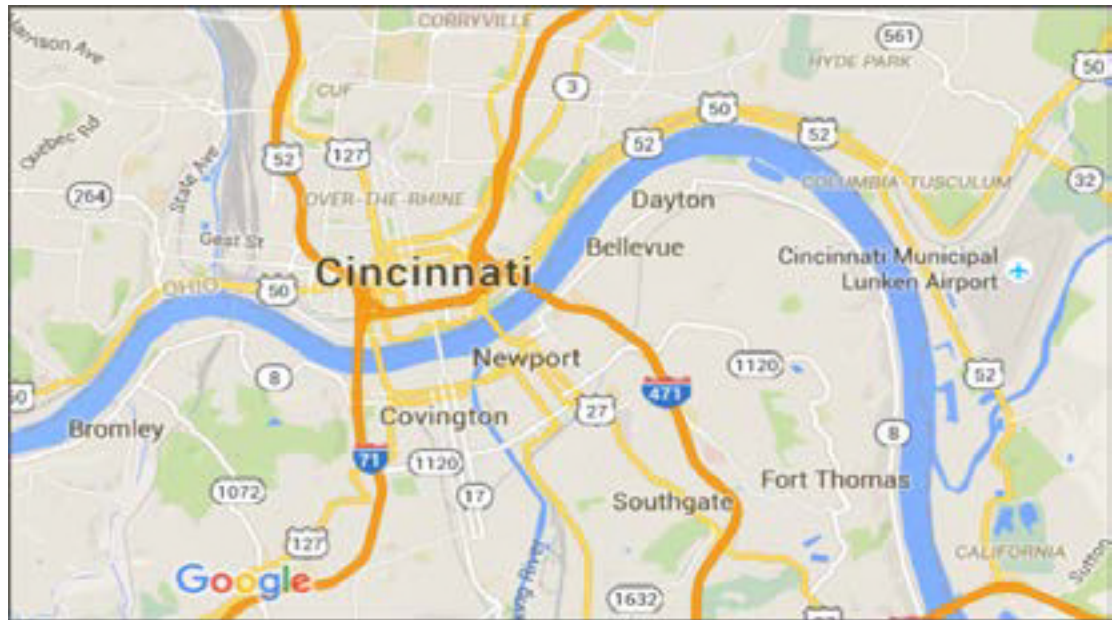
One company web site I studied recently proudly stated, "*We strive to be ethical*". Wow! What the heck is that? Being 'ethical' is like being pregnant. You are, or you're not. To paraphrase Yoda, the Jedi master from *Star Wars*, "*There is no strive. There is do, or not do!*"

Our Vision will guide everything we do. It will get "*everyone singing from the same hymn sheet*," as my Grandma used to say. That's what a Vision is for. It will also be the most effective recruitment tool when hiring key personnel. Good people want to join a business that knows where it's going.

And, as a practical matter, if we don't have a clear Vision for the future of our business, our business as we best understand it is our business as it just was...and we constantly hire for the immediate past, rather than hiring people with the skills, knowledge and experience to get us where we commit to be in three to five years.

A business Vision is like a lot like a map showing how to get from here to there. If you've never been to Cincinnati, you wouldn't think of driving there without a map (forget GPS for a minute here, it messes up my whole example); so why would you lead your business some-

***We need to  
stop aiming  
and start  
committing.***



where it's never been before without a map?  
But most businesses do precisely that.

For a map to be useful, you must know two things: where you are now and where you commit to be at some point in the future. The problem is many businesses are in denial about where they are right now about where they are right now in terms of clear market positioning, value delivery, customer reputation, systems and processes, staff engagement, management effectiveness and operational efficiency. And, they have no idea where they commit to be in three to five years. They're just making it up as they go along. This usually ends badly.

So, how can you get from here to there, if you don't know where here is and have no idea where there is? But, sadly, that's the reality many businesses face.

## OUR MISSION

What's the difference between a Vision and a Mission? Most Vision and Mission statements look so much alike it's hard to be sure which is which if the document titles are covered.

As was just stated, our Vision is a clear and measurable statement of what the business commits to become in three to five years. If you don't like the word Vision, call it a three-year or a five-year Business Commitment. Let's not get hung up on terminology.

Our Mission, on the other hand, is a clear and measurable statement of what the business commits to do this year to move towards our three- to five-year Vision. If we don't do specific things each year, we will never get to our Vision. We create a fresh, updated Mission Statement every year.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO ACTION

Finally, from our annual Mission comes our 'Commitment to Action' for the year. This is a detailed Action Plan stating specifically what will be done, by whom, by when, at what cost and measured how.

This detailed document makes sure effective implementation takes place. Businesses don't die from a single shot to the head, they die slowly but surely from a thousand uncompleted tasks. Our 'Commitment to Action' ensures what needs to be done, gets done – on time and on budget.

So, from our three- to five-year Vision comes our annual Mission, which is implemented through a detailed 'Commitment to Action.' This is a living, breathing and accountable process that works!

While most Vision and Mission Statements gather dust on the foyer wall or in someone's desk drawer, this three-step process turns our long-term commitments into specific actions that engage everyone in moving the business forward. It is simple, it's effective and it can transform your business. **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 management speaker and business 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, weekly, 'straight talk' management blog, go to [www.donaldcooper.com](http://www.donaldcooper.com)*

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For help in creating a clear Vision, Mission and Commitment to Action for your business, you can purchase Donald's step-by-step *Vision Critical Guide* (as a PDF download) for just \$24 at [www.donaldcooper.com](http://www.donaldcooper.com).

# INDUSTRY CALENDAR

*September 10 to 13, 2019*  
**CASUAL MARKET CHICAGO**  
 International Casual  
 Furnishings Assn.  
 The Mart  
 Chicago  
[casualmarket.com](http://casualmarket.com)

*September 21 to 23, 2019*  
**CANTREX PRIMETIME**  
 Cantrex Nationwide  
 Shaw Centre/Westin Hotel  
 Ottawa  
[cantrexprimetime.ca](http://cantrexprimetime.ca)

*September 24, 2019*  
**CHFA ANNUAL GOLF CLASSIC**  
 Canadian Home Furnishings  
 Alliance  
 Caledon Woods Golf Club  
 Bolton, Ontario  
[chfaweb.ca](http://chfaweb.ca)

*September 26 to 29, 2019*  
**INTERIOR DESIGN SHOW  
 VANCOUVER**  
 Vancouver Convention Centre  
 (West Building)  
[vancouver.interiordesignshow.com](http://vancouver.interiordesignshow.com)

*October 19 to 23, 2019*  
**HIGH POINT MARKET**  
 High Point, NC  
[highpointmarket.org](http://highpointmarket.org)

*November 17 to 20, 2019*  
**SHOWTIME**  
 International Textile  
 Marketing Assn.  
 High Point, NC  
[showtime-market.com](http://showtime-market.com)

*January 7 to 10, 2020*  
**CES**  
 Consumer Technology  
 Association  
 Las Vegas Convention Center  
 Las Vegas, NV  
[ces.tech](http://ces.tech)

*January 13 to 19, 2020*  
**IMM COLOGNE**  
 The International  
 Interiors Show  
 Koelnmesse GmbH  
 Cologne, Germany  
[imm-cologne.com](http://imm-cologne.com)

*January 16 to 18, 2020*  
**CANADIAN FURNITURE  
 SHOW**  
 Quebec Furniture  
 Manufacturers Assn.  
 International Centre  
 Mississauga, ON  
[canadianfurnitureshow.com](http://canadianfurnitureshow.com)

*January 16 to 19, 2020*  
**INTERIOR DESIGN SHOW**  
 Metro Toronto Convention  
 Centre South  
 Toronto  
[interiordesignshow.com](http://interiordesignshow.com)

*January 26 to 30, 2020*  
**TORONTO GIFT & HOME FAIR**  
 Canadian Gift Assn.  
 Toronto Congress Centre  
 Mississauga, ON  
[cangift.org](http://cangift.org)

*January 26 to 30, 2020*  
**LAS VEGAS MARKET**  
 World Market Center  
 Las Vegas, NV  
[lasvegasmarket.com](http://lasvegasmarket.com)

*January 27 to 30, 2020*  
**THE INTERNATIONAL  
 SURFACE EVENT (TISE)**  
 Mandalay Bay Convention  
 Center  
 Las Vegas  
[intlurfaceevent.com](http://intlurfaceevent.com)

*March 6 to 9, 2020*  
**MALAYSIAN INTERNATIONAL  
 FURNITURE FAIR**  
 Putra World Trade Centre  
 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
[miff.com.my](http://miff.com.my)

*March 18 to 20, 2020*  
**ISPA EXPO**  
 International Sleep  
 Products Assn.  
 Ernest N. Morial  
 Convention Center  
 New Orleans, LA  
[sleepproducts.org](http://sleepproducts.org)

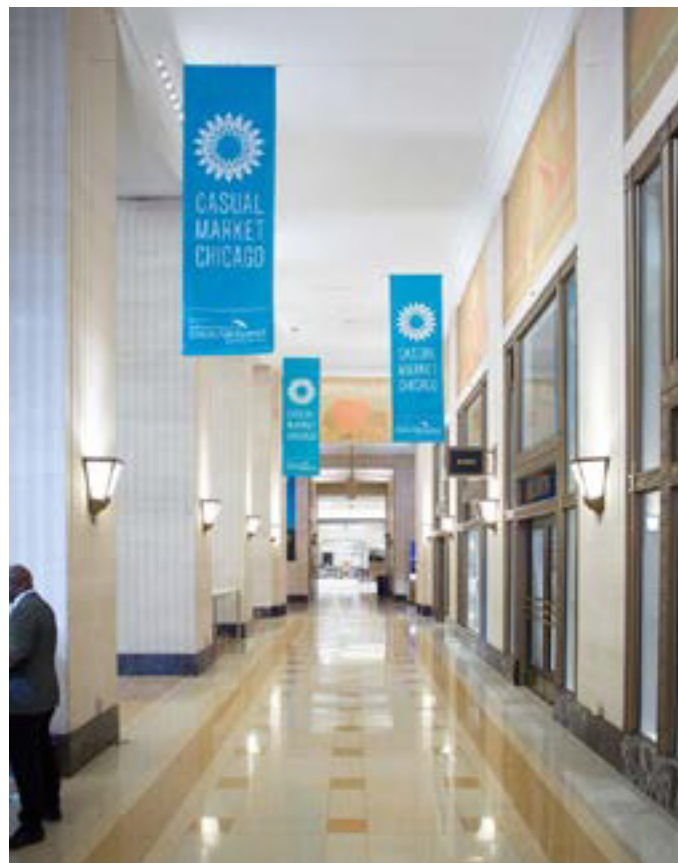


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 T: 702.599.9621  
[lasvegasmarket.com](http://lasvegasmarket.com)

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