THE Winter 2025

CONNECTION

A Lancaster County Showcase Publication



YEAR 2026: DESIGN FORECAST WHAT TO EXPECT IN TRENDS AND COLORS page 14

THE FURNITURE BUYER'S PHOBIA

IDENTIFYING & REMOVING COMMON SHOPPER FEARS page 36



EDITOR SPEAKS

2025 is hustling to a close and we can't wait to see what will be happening in 2026! New craftsmen, new stores, new renovations and new metrics will allow us to help you succeed! The Showcase is adapting to these ever changing times in order to help your customers have the best experience ever!

With cold winter weather coming in it'll make buying via Virtual Tours even more appealing. It's easier than ever to schedule a tour. Just go to LancasterCountyShowcase.com/virtual-tours

Don't miss the exciting 2026 design forecast that we packed into this edition of the Connection as well as the hundreds of premium products from our favorite craftsmen.

And remember, All-American means it's also 100% tariff free!

-Rich Warner managing editor

Questions/Comments?

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Lancaster County Showcase

836 Houston Run Drive Suite 201 Gap, PA 17527

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Monday - Friday 8am - 4pm

First Saturday of Every Month 8am - noon



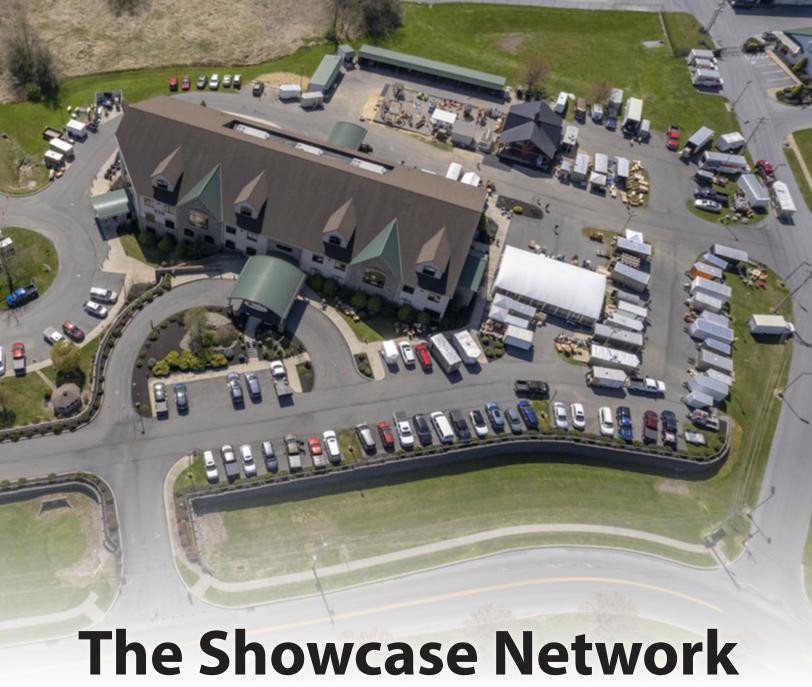
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Tools To Help Stores Find American-Made Furniture





featured manufacturers

Fighting Creek



As country artist Luke Bryan sang, "Rain makes corn, and corn makes whiskey." What many people don't know is that oak wood also plays a crucial role in producing whiskey. The original distilling process creates an alcoholic liquid that is devoid of color and often contains nasty flavors. To give the whiskey a more rounded profile, it goes through an aging process (anywhere from six to thirty years) within oak barrels where the natural compounds of the wood infuse the beverage with color and flavor.

Lots of care and craftsmanship is employed to manufacture these whiskey barrels from the choicest white oak lumber. Next the inside of the barrel is charred to help release the natural tannin and other aging compounds inside the wood.

Because the whiskey 'uses' some of the natural compounds in the wood, the barrels can only be used once. So what happens with these spent whiskey barrels? Erik Edwards at Fighting Creek Furniture and the Amish builders he has partnered with have found a truly genius way to give them new life.

Erik has a long history in the furniture industry. For twenty years, he owned and operated his own furniture store in Virginia and North Carolina. In September of 2012, Erik closed the doors of his store for the last time and stepped into an emerging market that intrigued him, Amish furniture. As a store owner, Erik saw the untapped potential of Amish furniture, but he also knew how difficult and time consuming it was to buy from so many small shops. It was time to transform the industry.

Using Erik's industry experience and networking skills, Fighting Creek Furniture grew rapidly during the next few years by partnering with Amish builders. The company soon manufactured pretty much everything except bedding and upholstery. Even as they increased production they kept true to their focus of building Amish, American-made furniture.

"Creativity drives business," Erik mentioned during our interview. The search for uniqueness finally drove Erik to whiskey, at least to the whiskey industry, where he became fascinated with the idea of refurbishing old whiskey barrels. It took some ingenuity to transform a whiskey barrel into coffee table (a barrel is a barrel after all) but working closely with his Amish craftsmen, Leroy and Eli, they were able to add exciting new pieces to the small collection of whiskey barrel furniture that the craftsmen were already building.

Since then, the team has added many unique products including, dining chairs, wine hutches, lift top coffee tables, and even a large American flag wall sign! Recently, they've spent a lot of time designing sofa, end, and coffee tables bases and combining them with a variety of live edge hardwood tops.

continued on page 9

▶ The Barrel Stave table features a solid quarter-sawn white oak top, whiskey stave legs, and genuine whiskey barrel plug accents. The 42" round top swivels making it especially functional in the game room.



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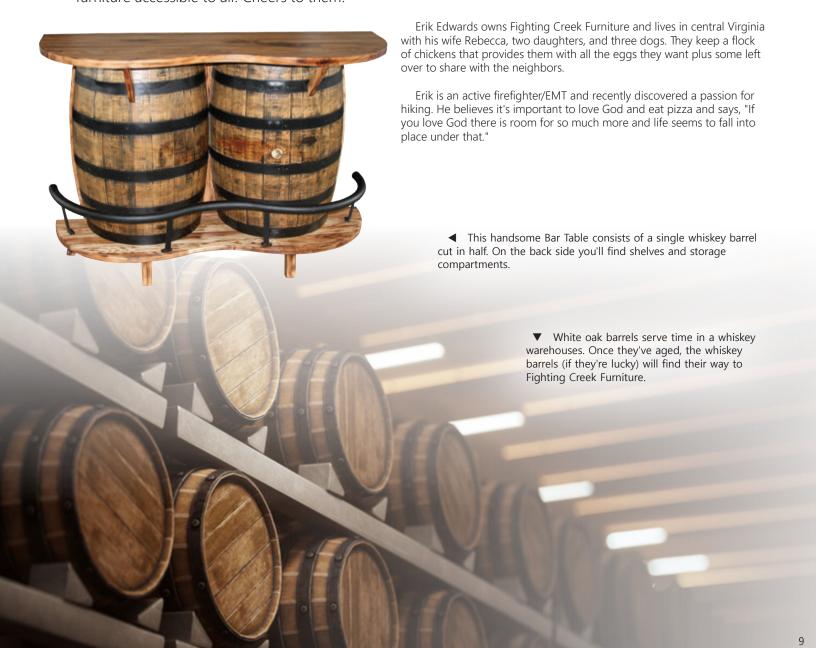
FIGHTING CREEK FURNITURE....continued from page 4

"It's definitely a masculine product," Erik chuckled. "Man-caves and wine cellars are popular destinations for the whiskey barrel furniture." This is especially true for the pub tables, bars, and bottle holders, but items like the coffee tables and smaller barrel end tables are a perfect accent piece (and conversation starter) for many living rooms.

Converting barrels into furniture takes lots of skill, and Erik credits his talented craftsmen for creating beautiful pieces of furniture. The wooden barrel staves are sometimes flattened and the edges sanded, but the team is careful to preserve the original character of the barrel. The furniture is then stained or left with the natural color before being coated with a highly durable wood sealant. The charred inside of the barrel remains visible on some items, and homeowners frequently comment about the lingering whiskey aroma.

Today, Fighting Creek Furniture supplies stores across the nation with Amish furniture of all types, but the whiskey barrel collection is a favorite with many buyers. Store owners appreciate that they can buy many different products from one provider and Erik and his team work hard to make the logistics and scheduling as hassle free as possible. Their new (and larger) booth at Lancaster County Showcase equips them to provide a larger selection and more stock.

We're proud of the folks at Fighting Creek Furniture and the energy they've invested to make American furniture accessible to all! Cheers to them!



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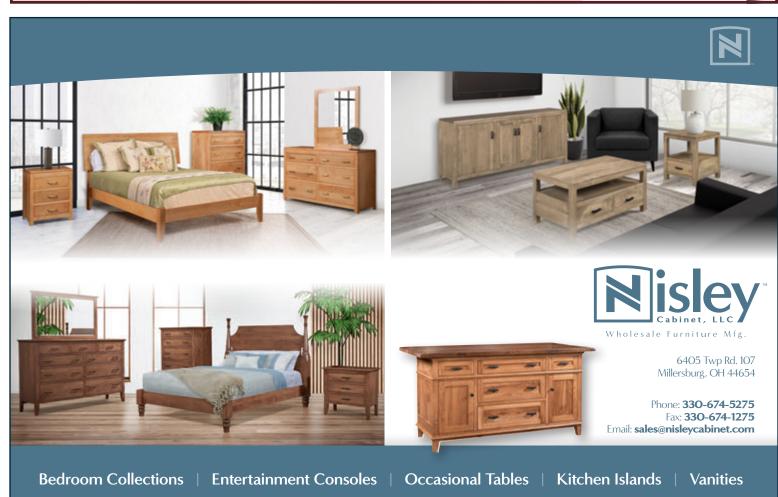




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RICH WARNER - SALES MANAGER

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TRENDS YOU'LL LOVE LIVING WITH

by Oliver Fitz

As 2026 rounds the bend, it's tempting to dust off the crystal ball and summon interior design predictions. But no need—we've already captured some of the future in this article! The design horizon is looking clearer than you might expect, and the trends coming our way promise both comfort and creativity.

THE REIGN OF MURKY COLORS

Uniquely enough, the most consistent prediction across the board is that of murky colors. Most design leaders agree that the cool tones of the last few years are being rapidly replaced with warm, comforting shades. In 2026, we can expect a lot of grounded colors, often with an elegant twist.



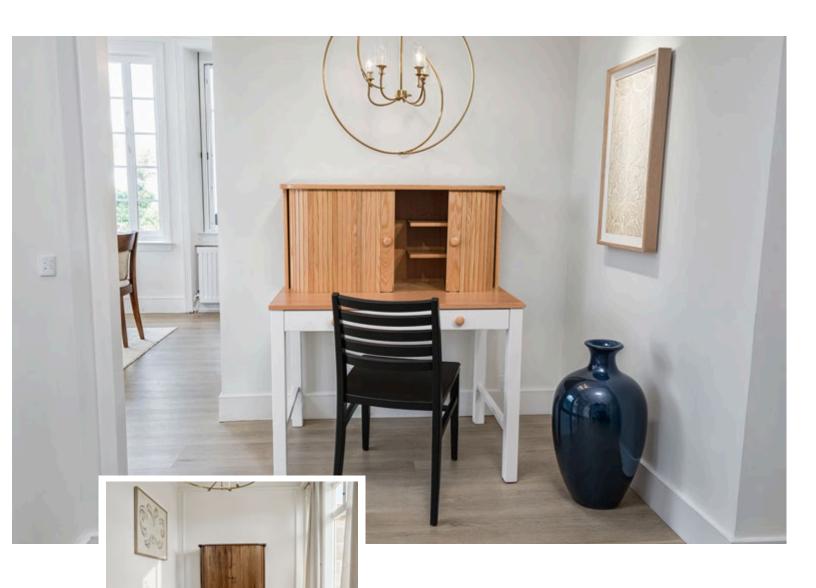
This shift in color preference likely comes from consumers' desire to find comfort and security in their living spaces as they feel increasingly threatened by a rapidly changing world. Unlike their gaudy counterparts, muted shades have a deeper, more stable personality, which adds to their timelessness. This, too, may reflect consumers investing their hard-earned money in slower design cycles that promise longer life spans.

Few 2026 colors will survive this "muting down," and even accent colors are likely to lose their gloss and coolness in favor of warmer shades. This doesn't mean a year of boring colors, though! Be prepared for muted plum, rich raspberry, and soft cranberries. Birmingham-based designer Danielle Balanis predicts that consumers will be bold with colors like Sherwin Williams' Bengal Grass and Benjamin Moore's Chartreuse.

Even the dependable cool white is being driven off the stage by cozy creams and tans, often accompanied by wildly popular browns. If muted colors are the number one theme of 2026, then brown certainly tops the charts as the #1 hue. Look for earthy desert browns accented with turquoise and greens, or elegant chocolaty browns paired with off-whites and berry-red accents.

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■ Soft colors and copper accents lend a comfortable air to this kitchen. Few colors will survive the "muting down" predicted for 2026!



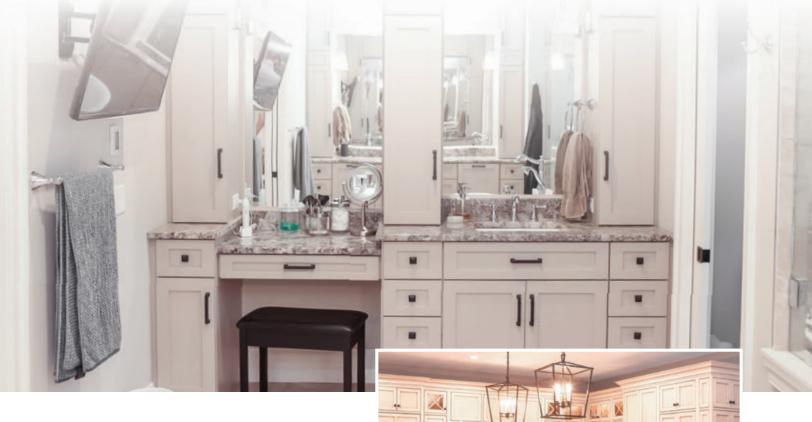




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2026 TREND FORECAST....continued from page 14

At first glance, 2026 colors may seem subdued, but their grounded nature is likely to be a springboard for creativity. One notable benefit of this incoming palette is that it won't feel obsolete as soon. Stable base colors and comforting shades point toward a slower style turnover and extended design life.

CURVES AHEAD: SOFTER SHAPES

With warmer colors come softer shapes! Get ready for rounded corners and gentler silhouettes on everything from coffee tables to bedrooms. Outdoor spaces may also break away from harsh metal edges and lean into rounded legs and mid-century modern styles—a definite boon for poly furniture manufacturers, who are better positioned to take advantage of this shift than their metal-framed counterparts.

Softer, flowing forms are set to become popular with a widespread resurrection of mid-century modern substyles like Japanese and Scandinavian. In recent years, these trends have merged into a hybrid called Japandi. One cornerstone of this style is the Scandinavian term 'hygge', which conveys the idea that a home should be a cozy sanctuary.

continued on page 21

■ Soft, flowing forms paired with natural imperfections



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2026 TREND FORECAST....continued from page 17

Expect textures to play a starring role in 2026—think woven fibers, raw wood, tactile ceramics, and natural textiles that invite touch. Japandi also embraces 'wabi-sabi', the appreciation of imperfection, which frees homes from feeling staged or overly precious. This philosophy encourages creativity and individuality while still maintaining visual calm. In an age when consumers are desperate for spaces that recharge them, Japandi's balance of function, beauty, and serenity makes it a trend with real staying power.

MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

Accent lighting may need to scoot over because mirrors are stepping into the spotlight for 2026. More than just reflective surfaces, mirrors enlarge spaces, bounce natural light, and—let's be honest—let us sneak one last look before leaving the house.

Mirrors with clean, elegant lines will likely be the safest bet, but brace yourself for a litany of funky accent mirrors, along with a modest revival of carved, elaborate frames as the design scene slowly warms to maximalist tendencies.

FAT FURNITURE: BARGING ONTO THE SCENE

FAT furniture—oversized, overstuffed, and intentionally bold—is still elbowing its way into the conversation. While not the dominant look, it appeals to those seeking an exaggerated sense of comfort and luxury. Picture oversized sofas, deep carpets, and rich browns designed to envelop both body and mind.

Though it sits in contrast to Japandi's restraint, FAT furniture addresses the same craving for stability and security. Think of it less as the leading star and more as the quirky supporting character—loved by some, tolerated by others, but always making an appearance.

continued on page 25

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VALUES OVER HISTORY

Perhaps the most surprising shift of 2026 won't be about color or shape at all, but about mindset. Shoppers are proving less impressed by history and more interested in buying from companies with values that match their own.

Gen Z especially wants brands that align with their political, spiritual, and environmental worldviews. They're seeking pieces that not only fill a space but also reflect personal visions and identities. The emphasis on values over history signals a deeper, cultural pivot—one that rewards innovation, authenticity, and experimentation.

At first glance, 2026's palette of muted shades and softer silhouettes might seem restrained. But in reality, this new design language provides a steady foundation for bold creativity. Rich browns will ground interiors, Japandi promises to bring serenity and warmth, mirrors are set to inject light and playfulness, and yes—even FAT furniture gets its moment. So yes, 2026 may look "muted." But in its quiet confidence may lie the perfect springboard for the next round of exciting innovation. •

■ Mirrors and other 'accent' items may take a 'maximalistic' turn in 2026 as shoppers look for a sense of playfulness and creativity.



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THE AMERICAN SHOPPER'S DILEMMA

by Oliver Fitz

BUYING FURNITURE: DREADED NECESSITY OR LOADS OF FUN

Buying furniture should be one of the most exciting purchases a person makes. After all, it's not just about filling a space—it's about shaping the way we live, relax, and connect with others. The right sofa becomes the backdrop for movie nights, the right dining table hosts countless family dinners, and the right bed sets the stage for years of rest. In theory, shopping for these pieces should be a wonderful experience.

But for many Americans, it's a frustrating, confusing, and intimidating challenge. The furniture industry has developed a reputation for hidden fees, delivery nightmares, poor customer service, and a general lack of trust. Instead of feeling empowered, buyers feel overwhelmed. Instead of an exciting design journey, they face delays, damaged goods, and aggressive sales pitches.

But that's not where this story ends. Today's furniture sellers have a wonderful opportunity to transform the narrative! By understanding what the average furniture buyer experiences and taking action to fix these pain points, retailers can transform the dreaded furniture hunt into a satisfying experience that keeps customers coming back for more!

WHY THE AVERAGE AMERICAN DREADS BUYING FURNITURE

The furniture-buying process often begins on a high note. Shoppers imagine the comfort of a new sectional, the aesthetic of a sleek credenza, or the warmth of a solid wood dining table. They browse Pinterest boards and get excited about what their home could become. But as soon as they enter a showroom or click onto a retailer's website, reality sets in. All too often the excitement dissolves into a collection of stress inducing scenarios:

OVERWHELMING CHOICE Big-box retailers and online platforms often showcase thousands of items, many of them nearly identical. Instead of feeling inspired, shoppers get paralyzed. "What if I make the wrong choice?" becomes the dominant thought.

UNCLEAR PRICING That \$899 sofa? By the time delivery fees, warranty add-ons, and surprise surcharges are factored in, the total is far higher. The lack of transparency makes customers feel tricked before the piece even arrives.

AGGRESSIVE SALES TACTICS Many furniture stores still operate on commission-heavy models. Shoppers are pressured to "buy now before the sale ends" or nudged toward higher-margin pieces rather than guided to the product that best fits their needs.



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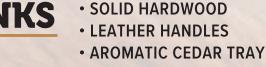
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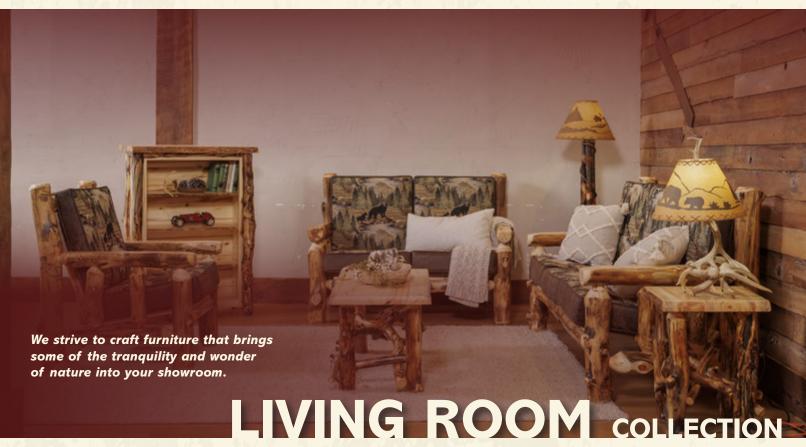
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SHOPPER'S DILEMMA....continued from page 36

LONG DELIVERY WAITS While Amazon has conditioned buyers to expect items in days, furniture often takes weeks or months to arrive. Promised timelines slip, leaving customers frustrated and powerless.

RETURN HASSLES Returning a shirt that doesn't fit is easy. Returning a sectional that overwhelms a small living room? That's a logistical and financial headache. Restocking fees, strict timelines, and the difficulty of coordinating pickup make most buyers regret trying at all.

What makes this worse is that Box Store marketing campaigns often promise breezy shopping, hassle-free setup, and "buy today, enjoy tomorrow" convenience. The disconnect between expectation and reality leaves consumers disappointed, stressed, and sometimes downright angry.

THE COMPLAINTS ARE REAL

There's a tendency to think that these disgruntled customers are just the fringe but complaint statistics suggests a broader issue. According to Consumer Affairs

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▶ Packaged furniture that requires complex assembly is a frustrating and time consuming procedure for American shoppers.



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the falling consumer satisfaction is especially pronounced among some of the largest importers like West Elm, Pottery Barn, IKEA, Wayfair, and Overstock. Combined, these retailers have experienced a shocking decline in positive reviews on Trustpilot, going from 79% in 2011 to a embarrassingly low 9% in 2022.

Estimates indicates that as many as 6% of last year's furniture buyers were frustrated enough to give a negative rating on platforms like Better Business Bureau, TrustPilot, and similar consumer trust organization. This number doesn't take into consideration the more frequent (and equally damaging) complaints on social media and other 'informal' channels.

Damaged goods consistently make up the lion's share of consumer complaints. Shoppers report receiving pieces with chipped veneer, wobbly legs, or cushions that look nothing like the display model. For many, the hassle of arranging a repair or replacement feels worse than living with the defect.

Another recurring theme is delayed deliveries. Customers often accept the idea that furniture takes time, but what really rubs them the wrong way is when promised timelines keep shifting. Waiting six weeks is one thing; waiting twelve weeks after being told "just a few more days" is another. Poor communication compounds the problem. Many buyers report having to chase down updates themselves, calling service lines repeatedly with little success.

Poor communication also shows up in how companies handle problems. Automated emails, unhelpful chatbots, or untrained staff leave customers without clear answers. Instead of feeling cared for, shoppers feel dismissed.

The cumulative effect is a loss of trust in major furniture brands. Buyers assume they'll have to fight for fair treatment, that delays are inevitable, and that the advertised image won't match reality. When people enter a purchase expecting to be disappointed, the industry has a credibility crisis.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

How did we get here? Much of the problem can be traced back to major consolidation, off-shoring, and cost-cutting in the industry.

continued on page 50



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▲ Some furniture imports travel more than 11,000 miles before arriving at their new home. This causes lengthy delays and frequent shipping damage that leaves customers frustrated.

SHOPPER'S DILEMMA....continued from page 42

For decades, American furniture hubs, like Virginia's Piedmont and North Carolina, produced goods known for their durability and craftsmanship. But as big-box store chains grew and consumer demand for low prices intensified, many companies shifted production overseas. Imports offered cost savings but at a steep (often disguised) trade-off: longer supply chains, less accountability, and more quality-control issues.

Retailers invested heavily in marketing, painting a picture of elegance and timeless quality, but often delivered mass-produced goods that didn't live up to the promise. Delivery systems struggled to keep pace, customer service departments were trimmed back, and the entire buying experience became more about moving volume than cultivating loyalty. In other words, the industry traded trust for margin. And consumers noticed.

STRATEGIES FOR FIXING THE BUYER EXPERIENCE

The problems may be systemic, but they aren't unsolvable. Retailers who want to rebuild trust and stand out can take clear, practical steps.

TRANSPARENT PRICING. Stop hiding fees. List the true cost upfront—including delivery, warranty, and assembly options. Shoppers respect honesty, and knowing what they're getting into makes them more likely to commit.

CUSTOMER-FIRST DELIVERY. Delivery doesn't need to be lightning fast; it needs to be reliable. Set realistic timelines, provide proactive updates, and offer service levels that fit the buyer's needs—from curbside drop-off to full whiteglove installation.

TRAINED GUIDES Sales staff should be trained to guide, not push. Imagine if furniture salespeople acted more like design consultants. Instead of pressuring customers into closing, they'd help them visualize how a piece fits their lifestyle and home. Shoppers walk away feeling understood, not manipulated.

SIMPLIFIED RETURNS. Returns are a major pain point, but they don't have to be. Offering clear, reasonable policies—such as a trial period or low-cost pickup service—reduces anxiety and encourages purchase. A customer who knows they can change their mind is far more likely to buy in the first place.

Invest in U.S. manufacturing partnerships. Sourcing locally shortens delivery timelines, strengthens quality control, and provides retailers with a unique selling point. Highlighting American craftsmanship adds value that consumers increasingly care about.

50 The Connection

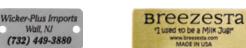
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Beyond these fundamentals, retailers can make shopping fun again. In-store "design bars" where customers test fabrics and build mood boards, augmented reality tools that let shoppers see furniture in their own living rooms, and transparent social proof from happy buyers all add joy to the process.

THE CASE FOR AMERICAN **CRAFTSMANSHIP**

Domestic manufacturing isn't just a nostalgic nod to the past—it's a practical solution to modern frustrations. When furniture is made in the U.S., shipping delays are drastically reduced. Shorter supply chains mean customers aren't waiting on goods stuck at ports or delayed by overseas logistics. Local production also reduces the likelihood of damage during transit since pieces don't travel halfway around the world before reaching a home.

Quality tends to improve. American-made furniture is often produced with stricter standards

continued on page 53

■ Delivery doesn't need to be lightening fast but it needs to be reliable. A professional delivery team or white glove partner is an important component in a satisfying customer experience.

H&NPOLY

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FAN BACK
5' GLIDER WITH CONSOLE
DRIFTWOOD ON BLACK



TWO TIER CONSOLE TABLE
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OCTAGON PICNIC TABLE
WEATHERED ON BLACK



44" SQ. COUNTER TABLE
COUNTER HEIGHT LADDER BACK ARM CHAIRS
ARUBA ON BIRCH





SHOPPER'S DILEMMA....continued from page 51

and better materials. Consumers notice the difference between a mass-produced, particleboard dresser and a solid-wood piece crafted with care. The former might look fine in an ad but begins to wobble within a year; the latter becomes a generational piece.

There's also a cultural and emotional component. Many Americans want to buy products that reflect their values: sustainability, ethical labor practices, and local support. U.S.-made furniture fits squarely within those desires. Highlighting craftsmanship, authenticity, and accountability resonates deeply with today's shopper.

For retailers, "Made in USA" isn't just a label; it's a marketing advantage. It signals trust, pride, and long-term value at a time when consumers are desperate for all three.

Finally, the case for improving customer experience is only becoming stronger. As e-commerce becomes more dominant, many brick-and-mortar stores find themselves deep in the experience/entertainment economy. No longer able to directly compete with the prices and speed offered online, savvy retailers

continued on page 64

■ More and more American furniture buyers are choosing handcrafted, American-made goods for less hassle and greater durability.



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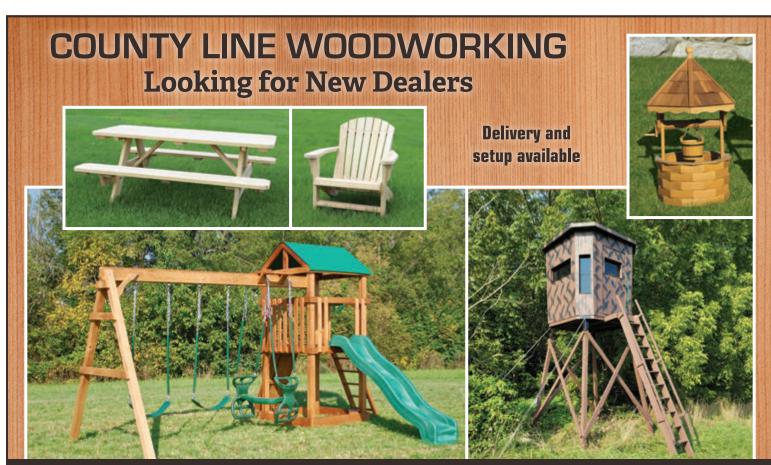
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SHOPPER'S DILEMMA....continued from page 53

are embracing the upsides they still possess. Things like personal accountability, friendly advice, and human relationship are areas that the internet will always struggle to accomplish as well as brick and mortar.

Furniture shopping shouldn't be a dreaded task. It doesn't need to entail endless choices, hidden fees, delayed deliveries, and poor communication. Instead, it's time to reimagine retail, rise to the occasion, and create experiences that are so much fun that the customer can't wait to do it again.

Retailers who rise to the challenge of creating exceptional experiences will set themselves apart in a crowded market. They'll earn loyalty not just for selling a sofa, but for making the entire journey—from browsing to delivery—a positive memory. •

▶ Brick and mortar stores provide shoppers with immersive experiences and real world relationships that online stores can't. Retailers who create exceptional experiences will set themselves apart!









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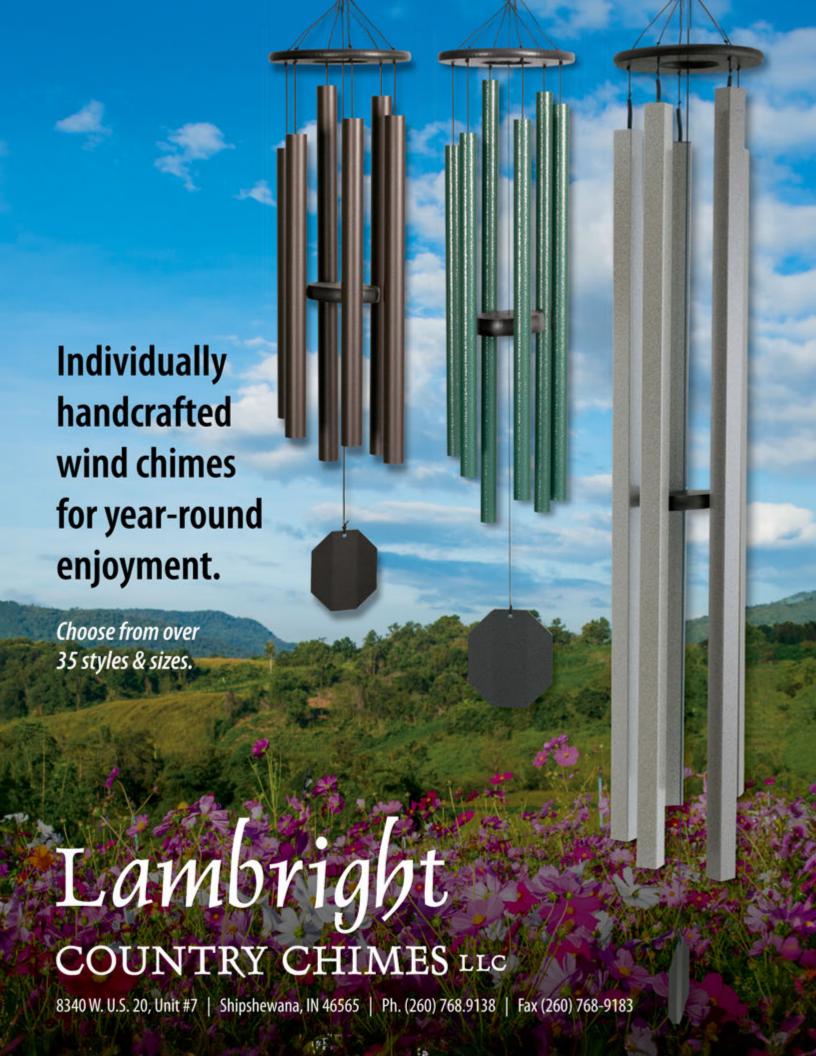


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| A&L Furniture - Beds, Bunk Beds, Loft Beds, Hanging Daybeds, Tables (see page 24) | 814-349-8203 Jesse |
| Artisan Chair - Bedroom and Dining Room Furniture (see page 10) | 260-768-4488 Marvin |
| Buckeye Rockers - Rockers, Gliders, Swivel Gliders, Office Chairs (see page 29) | 330-897-2193 |
| Byler's Bent Oak - Oak, Cherry and Hickory Rockers, Ottomans, Gliders, Footstools, End Tables (see page 40) | 724-946-5192 John |
| Country Comfort Woodworking - Dining Room Tables and Chairs (see page 37) | 330-359-0535 Joseph |
| Criswell Furniture - Bedroom Furniture, Occasionals | 330-695-2082 Jonas |
| EA Wood Products - Dining Chairs (see page 12) | 260-301-4375 |
| Ebony Woodworking - Occasional Tables, Live Edge Dining Tables & Bar Tables | 330-279-2102 Nathan |
| El Woodworking - Office Furniture, Roll-up Desks, Bookcases (see page 7) | 260-761-3308 |
| Eli's Woodshop - Fine Dining and Bedroom Collections (see page 25) | 717-768-0220 Alvin |
| Elm Crest Furniture - Mission Style Motion Upholstery (see page 30) | 717-625-3411 Amos |
| Farmcraft Rockers - Mission Style Rockers (see page 42) | 717-656-0520 Levi |
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| Fisher's Furniture - Dining Room Furniture (see page 23) | 717-355-9890 |
| Fisher's Quality Products - Cribs, Conversions, Bedroom Furniture | 717-786-8342 Joe |
| FN Chairs - Dining, Library, and Office Chairs (see page 34) | 260-463-8938 |
| Frog Pond Furniture - Bedroom Furniture, Occasionals (see page 11) | 330-987-3942 John |
| Heritage Wood Designs LLC - Kitchen Islands, Pantries, and Hutches (see page 32) | 574-825-4700 |
| Hillside Chair LLC - dining chairs (see page 32) | 330-359-5991 |
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| Schrock's Furniture - Fine Bedroom and Occasional Furniture (see page 34) | 574-642-5079 Clayton |
| Sunrise Cabinets - bedroom furniture (see page 6) | |
| Sweet Water Woodworks - Custom Kitchens and Baths, Build and Design (see page 16) | 610-273-1270 Jonas |
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| Townline Furniture - Hutches, Curios, Sideboards, Islands (see page 43) | 260-499-4875 \ |
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| Troy Lane Woodcraft - Bedroom Furniture (see page 17) | |
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| Wengerd Wood Products - Dining Room Furniture (see page 31) | |
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| Custom Wood Creations - Live Edge Slabs, Tables, Coffee Tables, End Tables (see page 24) | |
| Eberly's Hometown Designs - Tables, Floating Shelves, Frame Art | |
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| Fireside Log Furniture - Rustic Bedroom, Dining Room Furniture (see page 7) | |
| Honey Brook Woodcraft - Primitive Pine Furniture, Chests, Tables, Benches | |
| Hoover's Old Wood Furniture - Old Wood, Tables, Chairs, Benches | |
| M.K. Crafts - Plasma TV Stand, Pie Safe, Jelly Cabinet, Occasionals | |
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| Quad M Rustics - Rustic Log Furniture (see page 33) | |
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| Linden Grove Woodworking - Pressure Treated Picnic Tables, Chairs, Swings (see page 61) | |
| M&M Enterprises - Cedar Outdoor Furniture, Wishing Wells | |
| Meadowview Lawn Creations - Poly Lawn Furniture (see page 46) | |
| North Star Poly - Poly Dining and Pub Sets - 20+ Color Options (see pages 58-59) | |
| Parkman Poly LLC - Poly Outdoor Furniture (see page 61) | |
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| DG Stoltzfus - Roofing, Construction, Garages, Decks | 610-883-6632 Davi |
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SEE PAGE 13

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