

Saving Time and Money by Demystifying the Relationship Between Furniture Representatives, Dealers and Designers

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1:30-2:30 pm

Session: W21

Presenters:

Vega Overby, IIDA, LEED® AP - Hickok Cole Architects

Elizabeth Hurley - Kimball Office

Debby Allen - DRH Designs

MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVE:

- Represents only one line of product such as Kimball, Herman Miller or Knoll.
- Hired by the manufacturing company they represent but also works on commission.
- Lines typically include a systems furniture, case goods, filing, and ancillary furniture including seating and conference tables.

Approach:

- Cultivates relationships with designers and end users.
- Builds customer base by establishing new strategic accounts and MPA's.
- Utilizes product knowledge and persuasive selling skills to drive specification requirements.
- Sets up furniture tours of facilities to designers and end users to educate them on the product.
- Provides support to the dealer.
- Can usually influence ship dates and commitments from the factory.
- Provides mock-ups for large scale projects.
- The "bad guy" when necessary.

INDEPENDENT MANUFACTURER'S REPRESENTATIVE ROLE:

- Typically represents numerous product lines to offer a full furnishing solution. Usually smaller manufacturing companies.
- Markets to dealers, architects and designers, and end users.
- Will provide product information to the interior designer and make recommendations for best cost/value.
- Will provide pricing and pricing specials to a selected furniture dealer and provide product information and support to the selected dealer.
- Typically own their own business and are paid a commission from the manufacturers based on their assigned territory sales.

Saving Time and Money by Demystifying the Relationship Between Furniture Representatives, Dealers and Designers

Approach:

- Cultivates relationships with designers and end users.
- Looks for long term business development opportunities.
- Cultivates relationships with dealers to provide recommendations to the designer on which dealer may service their purposes best for the selected product groups.
- Offers furniture tours of facilities to designers and end users to educate them.
- Can usually influence ship dates and commitments from the factories.
- Provides mock ups for large scale projects.

FURNITURE DEALER ROLE:

- Services include installation, project management, space planning, fabric and finish selections, storage, re-configurations, warranty services, and continuing services directly to the end user.
- Typically has access to most industry lines of furniture and system furniture. Usually large system furniture dealers only have a few selected dealers allowed to sell their lines.

Approach:

- Meets with the designers to gain an understanding of the scope of the project.
- Meets with the end user if agreeable in order to present a team approach.
- Provides selection options that would best meet the clients cost and needs.
- Space planning and selection of finishes and fabrics on the furniture in conjunction with the theme/palette selected by the designer.
- Approval of the drawings from the customer.
- Pricing proposal submittal/approved by client.
- Orders furniture and tracks ship dates.
- Project manages the entire installation.
- Follow-up and resolution to any punch list items.
- Provides continuing service to the customer, addressing future needs and/or warranty issues.

Clients fall into many categories, such as large corporate, government direct, government through developers and healthcare. We have provided you with handouts about these various groups but will focus our discussion today on those clients which fall outside of these categories. Today's panel will concentrate primarily on projects within the range of 1-50 stations.

Special Factors - GSA, GSA through Developers, Healthcare and Large Corporate Clients

GSA PROJECT INFORMATION

Factors to Consider.....

1. GSA Federal Supply Schedules (FSS) provide the best price to Federal Agencies and Department of Defense (DOD).
 - Product prices are fixed based on the FSS.
 - If the project is over the maximum order limit (MOL), only the manufacturer/schedule holder can determine if additional discount is appropriate.
2. Any public or tax payer funded project should be competed.
 - Full and open competition.
 - Limited competition.
 - Specific schedule (i.e. Multiple Awards Schedule or Packaged Office Schedule).
3. Most manufacturers have some product on the FSS.
 - Many dealers do not have an FSS.
 - Product not on schedule must be designated as "Open Market."
4. Why would product not be on the FSS?
 - New product introduction.
 - Non-manufacturer specific fabrics.
 - Products made in countries without trade agreements with the United States.
5. Understand or know your customer's procurement strategy.
 - What is the furniture budget?
 - Who is responsible for the procurement?
 - How will it be procured?
 1. Limited or full and open bid process
 2. Set aside
 3. Sole source
 4. Federal or state prison industries

Additional Designer Notes...

- It typically takes much longer to receive an order through GSA procurement. Designers need to encourage their clients to finalize this as early in the process as possible.
- Many times the furniture system, dealer or order may not be established until after the Construction Documents are already out. This may result in the need to verify that the furniture and power locations are coordinated before construction begins. This may also require a permit revision.
- Many times GSA will not allow designers to work directly with the furniture dealer, instead requiring them to "speak" thru the contracting agent. This adds time to the process.

Special Factors - GSA, GSA through Developers, Healthcare and Large Corporate Clients

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES THRU DEVELOPERS PROJECT INFORMATION

Factors to Consider.....

- When hired by a developer to move an agency into their building designers may not have the restrictions of utilizing GSA standards or procurement.
- The agency still may have standards in place that they wish to use. If you know what system they have or prefer, contact the manufacturer's rep immediately to understand what program or discounts they have established. Most manufacturers have a government rep that deals specifically with the government. Most government reps have preferred deals they will recommend.
- Preferred dealers will have the clearances required for some secure facilities.

HEALTHCARE PROJECT INFORMATION

Factors to Consider.....

- Large institutions, ie. Hospitals, medical centers, nursing homes, typically purchase through national buying agreements.
- Two of the largest cooperative (like a national contract) agreements are Novations and Broadlane.
- The agreements are comprised of approved manufacturers and negotiated pricing, which can be held by the manufacturer or a dealer who may have numerous lines offered on the cooperative.
- The cooperatives offer single source procurement and management services. Many facilities have standards programs in effect.
- Many facilities have design contracts as well, and the firms may or may not be local.
- For ease of process, it is always best to check with the purchasing agent of the facility for information regarding their purchasing and selection process.
- May eliminate the need for bid.

LARGE CORPORATE PROJECT INFORMATION

Factors to Consider.....

- Clients such as Raytheon, BAE or Northrup Grumman typically already have a relationship and standards program with a furniture line and a dealer, called corporate accounts or national contracts.
- Utilizing their established contracts can speed up the procurement process and may eliminate the need to bid the job out.
- Designers should use the client's preferred lines and dealers unless there are very good reasons to do otherwise. If so, discuss this with the client and the rep first.

Opening Questions to Ask Your Clients

1. Do you currently work with anyone regarding furniture? Dealer and/or manufacturer?
2. Are you planning to bid this project to more than one manufacturer? How many are you planning to include?
3. Would you prefer to purchase all furniture pieces from one manufacturer? (A dealer has multiple other options to supplement the primary if you wish to look at other options.)
4. If you have a preferred manufacturer, do you plan to bid the project to more than one dealer? (They have different options available and their installation and overhead costs may vary).
5. What is your furniture budget? Is it included in the TI allowance or do you have a separate budget for furniture? (This will depend on the lease agreement).
 - Can you get a commitment on the furniture funding separate from the build out dollars?
6. What is most important to you with regards to furniture?
 - Style/design
 - Function
 - Price
 - Lead time
7. Who are the major stakeholders (people involved in the decision - GSA, the tenant, the landlord if it is turnkey.etc.)
8. Where do you get information on office furniture? Have people called on you directly?
9. What major challenges do you face time and again with your existing furniture? Quality? Repairs? Style?
10. How often do you reconfigure offices?
11. What is something you have to deal with today that was not even on your radar five years ago?
12. Are there any specific types of spaces within your organization that seem to be rapidly emerging (i.e. more square feet being allocated to this space)?
13. What would make the process go more smoothly?
14. What type of planning service is used? Will you do facilities in-house – pay to train your in-house staff, or will you need to call the dealer back in for reconfigurations?
15. Do you care if you have to deal with more than one dealer? Do you have inventory requirements that might require an offsite storage facility with someone to maintain the inventory?
16. Do you or the building require union installers?

Presenters



VEGA OVERBY, IIDA, LEED® AP
Associate
Hickok Cole Architects

Vega Overby received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1990. An Associate at Hickok Cole Architects with sixteen years' experience in programming, space planning, interior design and construction document production, Ms. Overby has designed and served as Project Manager for renovation and new construction projects ranging from 1,000 sf to 400,000 sf. Her field of expertise includes complex, large-scale phased construction projects for international quasi-government users. Skilled at conducting interviews with clients to identify programming and space planning requirements, Ms. Overby also prepares detailed space plans, furniture specification documents and construction documents, and provides construction administration services.

Ms. Overby holds professional certification by the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ Certificate No. 14412) and is LEED accredited in sustainable design by the U.S. Green Building Council.

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Presenters

ELIZABETH HURLEY

Strategic Account Manager - Northeast Kimball Office

A Kimball Office employee since 2004, Elizabeth Hurley brings over 14 years of furniture industry knowledge to each project. Her previous roles as designer, project manager, and business development manager assist in planning and executing seamless projects for her clients. As a Strategic Account Manager, Elizabeth is responsible for handling the needs of large US and International accounts for Kimball Office. Her attention to detail and creative nature bring value to the problem solving tasks and fast paced results inherent in our industry. Additionally, Elizabeth is Past President of Commercial Real Estate for Women, Virginia Chapter, and has honed her coordination and management skills in this role. In the past year she has presented several CEU courses on the topic of Cognitive Ergonomics, a subject that she is very passionate about.

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DEBBY ALLEN

Principal DRH Designs

With more than 16 years experience in the furniture and furnishings Industry, Debby Allen demonstrates a refreshing approach to developing the best work environment for productivity. Her projects include both large and small projects, domestically and internationally, for hospitality, GSA, commercial, education and healthcare. Her past positions as Commercial Property Manager, manufacturer representative and furniture dealer have allowed her to gain an understanding of every aspect of work space design, including, space planning, installation, project management, and a vast knowledge of numerous product lines. As President-Elect for Commercial Real Estate for Women, Virginia Chapter, she has been given the opportunity to lead an amazing organization while growing a network of professional contacts and fundraising for charitable causes both locally and nationally.

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