

Out of the **BOX**

INSIDE:

- **Business Resource Update:** *New Services being offered through WPF*

- **Welcome New Members**

- **Staff Spotlight:**
Ed Doucette - WPF's Road Warrior

- **Ivan Allen:**
Meeting the Challenge of Change

- **Meet:**
Dar•Ran Furniture Industries
WPF's Latest Supplier Partner

As 2007 enters its final quarter, it's encouraging to see the positive trends that continue in our industry. Many of our supplier and dealer members are having a good year and looking forward to more of the same in 2008.



Dennis J. Insogna
President and CEO

FROM THE **President's Desk**

WPF is also enjoying a solid and busy year. We recently announced the addition of two new supplier members. Dar•Ran, the High Point, NC quality veneer casegoods manufacturer, joined our ranks September 1 and will provide our dealers not only with access to value-priced veneer products but to their high-end veneer products and millwork capabilities. You can read more about them elsewhere in this issue and in the supplier section of our website. Dar•Ran has put together a terrific program for us, especially for those dealers who intend to use them as their primary veneer casegoods supplier.

Our dealers also asked us to find a high quality table manufacturer since Bretford has eliminated many of these products from their WPF offering. We are pleased to announce the addition of Berco as our newest supplier member to fill this void. You can find out more about their products and WPF program from the supplier section of our website.

The summer months have been extremely busy in terms of recruiting new dealers. Please join me in welcoming the new members listed in this issue.

During the summer we held a planning session at the Hyatt Regency Bonaventure Conference Center, the site of our 2008 WPF Annual Meeting. I'm confident you will be pleased with the facility's on-site spa and terrific meeting space. The theme of next year's meeting is "Building a More Successful Dealership" and we have many educational programs planned to help you do just that.

We have also changed our meeting format. We will start mid-afternoon on Monday, March 17 and end midday on Wednesday March 19, so that many of you will be able to come in Monday morning and catch late afternoon flights back home Wednesday.

For those dealers who wish to arrive on Sunday evening, however, we also will have a full schedule of pre-meeting training sessions on Monday morning, March 17. Please take a few minutes now to review our agenda online on www.wpfdealer.com.

It's seldom you hear about a contract dealer that changes their contract alignment but WPF dealer member Ivan Allen did just that last year. In this issue, you will learn how they successfully navigated through this challenging period. Also in this issue you will hear from staff member Ed Doucette, the ultimate road warrior, who is working hard to make our vision of being a comprehensive business resource for our members a reality.

WPF has been instrumental in helping the OFDA with the training agenda for their Dealer Strategies Conference and Expo which will take place November 4-6 in Atlanta. We will have a booth at this event and look forward to seeing those members that plan on attending. We urge you to attend and participate in this worthwhile organization.

Finally, I'm delighted to report that our supplier member sales are running well ahead of the industry average and we sincerely thank you for your support. We hope you have a very successful fourth quarter and enjoy this last issue of our newsletter for 2007.

If you have any questions or need help please don't hesitate to contact anyone on staff.

We exist to serve our members!

Regards, 



New Partnership with IntelliSell Helps Highlight Pricing Edge of Transitions™

It's become a whole lot easier for WPF dealers to present the outstanding value proposition of our new "Transitions" systems line product, thanks to our new partnership with IntelliSell, industry leaders in sales technology.

With IntelliSell, you can demonstrate the price advantage of Transitions literally with just a few mouse clicks. It couldn't be simpler! This easy to use software can assist with price comparisons with many systems products, and enable you to value engineer most major systems quickly and easily. It's not only a major time saver when it comes to sales and design work. It's also a very

effective resource for closing the deal!

Our agreement with IntelliSell includes a special discount for new users and they have already incorporated our entire Transitions product line for you to clearly see the pricing advantage this product brings to you. IntelliSell can also be used to compare seating and casegoods and they have already included some product from our newest supplier, Dar•Ran.

For additional information or a free, no-obligation demonstration, contact:

Gerry McDonald
ph: 804-934-9951 xt. 203;
email: gerry.mcdonald@intellisell-inc.com

New Consulting Service Opens the Door to Increased Profits and Productivity for Members

Discover opportunities to run your dealership more productively and profitably through a new alliance between WorkPlace Furnishings and industry consultant Craig Bopp. An industry veteran with close to 30 years' experience in contract furniture, Craig specializes in dealer operational issues, and has developed a proprietary

methodology for evaluating all aspects of a dealership's operations and identifying opportunities for improvement.

For more information, visit the Business Resource Center of the WPF web site or contact Craig at:

847-431-8458
email: craig.bopp@sbcglobal.net



WorkPlace Furnishings serves as a key resource for support across a broad spectrum of dealer needs, as the management team at Corporate Interiors of Delaware discovered recently, when WPF CEO Dennis Insogna facilitated an off-site planning session. To learn more about how you can put our education and consulting resources to work for your dealership, please contact WPF headquarters.

Welcome

New Members

WorkPlace Furnishings extends a warm welcome to these fine dealers and quality suppliers who recently joined our organization:

■ Furniture Consultants

New York, NY
<http://www.e-fci.com>

Welcome:
Michael Eble and staff

■ Jimenez Contract Services Limited

Houston, TX
www.j-c-s.com

Welcome:
Blake Blazek and staff

■ NBS

Northwood (Toledo), OH
www.navbus.com

Welcome:
Richard Schwabauer and staff

■ Office Pavilion San Diego

San Diego, CA
www.opsd.com

Welcome:
Vicky Carlson and staff

■ Smith CFI

Portland, OR
www.smithcfi.com

Welcome:
Jeff Iwasaki and staff

■ Berco

St. Louis, MO
www.bercoinc.com

Welcome:
John Francosky and staff

■ Dar•Ran

High Point, NC
www.darran.com

Welcome:
Jeff Hollingsworth and staff

Staff in the Spotlight



Meet Ed Doucette:

WorkPlace Furnishings' 'King of the Road'

impressive portfolio of top quality manufacturers that has always been one of the organization's strengths," he says.

"But the product side of WorkPlace has been enriched and enhanced by a steadily growing offering of outstanding programs and services designed to help members take key aspects of their overall dealer operations and make them stronger and more profitable."

Case in point: the sales leadership training seminars conducted by WPF president Dennis Insogna. Or our growing stable of expert industry consultants.

"Our current dealers are literally shocked by just how much WPF has become an asset for their businesses over the past two years," says Ed. "We've taken on much more of a consultative role for our members, to help them better compete in the marketplace and improve operations on several key levels."

Critical to the new focus is the role of the WPF Board of Directors. "It's impossible to overstate the importance of the Board in shaping the new WorkPlace," Ed contends. "Our Board tells the staff what they'd like to see us accomplish and then we go out and get it done."

The results of what is truly a team effort speak for themselves. Not only is there now a WorkPlace Furnishings dealer in 98 of the top 100 markets in the U.S., but the membership roster reads like a veritable "Who's Who" of the office furniture dealer community.

"Where else can you find such a concentration of top quality dealers that cut across all the major contract

affiliations?" asks Ed. "And the amount of sharing of new ideas and best practices that takes place among our members today is truly remarkable," he points out.

"It's very gratifying to see dealers willing to help other dealers. They're open and honest with suggestions and advice to help other dealer members

and that spirit is a major reason why our Annual Meetings have become so valuable and productive."

Talking of the Annual Meeting, Ed and the rest of the WPF team are hard at work right now on preparations for the 2008 event and he says, it's guaranteed to keep the momentum going and then some!

"We are very much committed to making it an absolute must-attend event for our members," he says. "They know they're going to be bringing back an enormous amount of value—not just from the manufacturers and their new products and programs, but equally importantly, from the education, the business resource center participants and the dealer-to-dealer networking."

Not surprisingly for a veteran road warrior, Ed has already got his travel booked for Fort Lauderdale, but don't be too surprised if he shows up on your doorstep before then. Those road warriors like to keep moving, particularly when they've got such a great story to tell!

Ed Doucette is the WorkPlace Furnishings road warrior. Since joining the organization, Ed has racked up the miles on just about all the major airlines and car rental firms. He's your go-to guy for tips on where to find the hotels with the best room rates in just about any major market and if you're looking for a good steak just about anywhere, Ed's the man to see.

But he's about a whole lot more than just a walking Fodor travel guide.

In addition to keeping the airlines and hotels happy, Ed has done more than his fair share to brighten things up for over 100 office furniture dealers. That's how many have joined WPF since he came on board just five years ago as director of dealer development.

But while Ed is a veteran sales and marketing professional with an impressive track record of successfully closing the deal in a number of industries, he freely admits signing up members for WorkPlace is not exactly among the toughest challenges he's ever faced.

As Ed points out on his recruiting calls, WorkPlace Furnishings has undergone a subtle but compelling shift in focus over the past few years. "We still have an



With more than 100 years of service to the business community in Atlanta and throughout the southeast, Ivan Allen Workspace is a company with a rich legacy of traditions and achievements.

Meeting the Challenge of

Change

So when the time came for a change in what had become one of its longest-held traditions—a move from Steelcase to Allsteel as its primary manufacturer—an outside observer might perhaps be forgiven for expecting upheavals and disruptions across the board.

However, says Ivan Allen president and chairman Louise Allen, that's not quite how it happened.

"We had been selling Steelcase for 60 years, so it was certainly not a change that we took lightly" Allen explains. "But we needed a new direction to respond to the demands of a rapidly changing market. Our customers wanted more, better, faster—all at the right value proposition—and in Allsteel, we saw a manufacturer who could meet those requirements and more. And as a company, we were looking for a true partner, with people who would be willing to roll up their sleeves and work more closely with us to provide our clients with what they were really looking for."

The idea of switching to Allsteel started to emerge shortly after Allen became the fourth generation of her family to head up the company in May of 2005. However, serious discussions didn't really get underway until the following year.

After a series of conversations and a visit to Allsteel's Muscatine, Iowa headquarters to tour their facilities, Allen and the Allsteel management team shook hands on the deal on December 15, 2006. That handshake, however, was just the beginning, and the dealership soon found itself embarked on a process that would impact literally all aspects of its operations.

"We recognized from the outset that effective communications—both externally to our clients and internally with all the outstanding people who work at Ivan Allen—would be absolutely key to our success," Allen recalls.

"In Atlanta, we took everyone to the Allsteel showroom to let them kick the tires and see the product. We also began a series of weekly conference calls company-wide, to keep everyone up to speed on what was going on and get them information in real time as much as possible."



Ivan Allen – continued from page 4

Ivan Allen is headquartered in Atlanta, but it also maintains branch operations in Augusta, Albany and Athens, GA, as well as in Knoxville and Chattanooga, TN.

Randy Nichols is general manager of the Atlanta operation and, he says, the change created some significant challenges for the 11-person sales team at headquarters.

“Internally, the biggest change was moving away from a customer base made up primarily of very large corporate clients and becoming far more of a new business development house,” Nichols explains.

“Taking sales people who were used to functioning primarily as account managers and re-focusing them on cold calling, getting out in the community and building up their networks, both in the A&D community and in the business community in general, took time,” he admits.

“But,” Nichols says happily, “the majority of our salespeople made a very successful transition to our new model and over the last couple of months, we have started to see some very encouraging results.”

In Atlanta, he reports, the entire sales force now conducts team cold calling for close to three hours every Friday morning. “When the entire sales team gets together and does it as a group, they can learn from each other and everyone benefits,” he says.

Having a business partner like WorkPlace Furnishings also helped with the transition. “We were part of the WPF organization before, but it’s become a perfect marriage for us now, with our change of culture and increased focus on new business development,” Nichols says.

“It was perfect timing to have a group of products that hit more mid-market and it’s been wonderful to be able to take advantage of it.”

Getting word out to the branches held different challenges, says Doug Wynne, general manager for the dealership’s branch locations. “We lost a few salespeople,” he admits, “but the vast majority stayed because they had faith in the company. Ivan Allen has a long and very proud tradition and many of our employees have been with us for a long time and are very much a part of that tradition.”

It also helped, he continues, that the managers at each branch saw the change as a way to put the dealership on a much stronger growth path overall.

“I went to our branch in Augusta the day after we made the announcement and walked in after our general



manager had obviously had a meeting with our people there,” Wynne remembers. “There was a whiteboard in the meeting room and written up on the board was a list of our core values. One of those core values is change, and that provided a seamless way to lead into the kind of conversation that we would have with each and every one of our people,” he explains.

“We talked about how the furniture industry is maturing, how all the products seem to look alike right now and how hard it is to differentiate yourself in the market. We also pointed out how so many of the traditional large corporate accounts are not growing and that business conditions are right to transition from a major accounts company to focus far more on new business development.”

Outreach on the change to the dealership’s client base was just as important, says Allen. “We had so many wonderful long-term clients that we’d

been working with for decades,” she explains. “We had developed a rapport with them and learned how to support their needs but we knew going forward we wouldn’t keep them all.”

Inevitably, she says, some clients felt they had too large of a base of installed Steelcase product to shift to a new manufacturer. But there was also a gratifyingly large group whose loyalty to the dealership outweighed those concerns.

“Right out of the gate, we had customers who took the view that they did business first and foremost with Ivan Allen and if we started selling a different product, then that’s what they were going to buy,” she says proudly. Others, adds Nichols, switched

dealers for future product purchases but still stayed with Ivan Allen for key services such as asset management, moves and reconfiguration work.

Today, as Allen and her team get ready to celebrate the first anniversary of the change, there’s a new sense of anticipation at the dealership. “Every day,” she says, “I thank the people who are here for their commitment and their courage in going through this change.

“There’s a lot of good chemistry in our organization right now and we’re all working hard to take the threads of our history and weave them into a pattern that’s based on new perspectives and new ways of doing things. We’ve already won some rather large projects, the momentum we have been working on so hard is really starting to build and after a year of change, we’re all excited about prospects for the future and focused on new opportunities.”

MEET Dar•Ran Furniture Industries

WPF's Latest Manufacturer Partner



Dar•Ran Spaces

"An exciting new addition to the WPF product offering that opens the door to some major new growth and profit opportunities for our dealers."

That's how WPF vice president of marketing Vic Maffe describes Dar•Ran Furniture Industries, the latest addition to our portfolio of top quality vendor partners. And you know what, he just may be on to something!

Since its founding in 1977, the High Point, North Carolina-based company has established an enviable reputation for

quality mid-priced casegoods. Its "built-to-order" manufacturing concept and a fierce, family business-inspired commitment to service and relationship building have helped position Dar•Ran as a key business partner for a broad base of dealers throughout the country and now, for WorkPlace Furnishings dealers, that partnership is moving to a new and even more productive level.

"We've been very impressed by the WorkPlace Furnishings organization," says Dar•Ran VP of sales Jeff Hollingsworth. "They're very relationship-oriented like we are and they have an enthusiasm and passion for what they're doing that is really contagious. There are some great dealerships in WorkPlace and we're really looking forward to helping them grow."

Growth is something Dar•Ran itself knows a fair bit about. Sales were up 22 percent in 2006 and are running 15 percent ahead so far this year, with the company's historically strongest quarter still to come. And all of those gains have been generated by home-grown product.

At a time when so much of the industry's attention is focused on imports, fully 100 percent of the Dar•Ran offering comes from the company's four North Carolina plants, where a team of 225 industry professionals are hard at work in some 350,000 sq. ft. of total manufacturing space.

"We certainly have to keep an eye on imports," admits Jeff, "but we feel we bring several strengths to the market that they can't match." Quality control and responsiveness figure high on the list. "We control our manufacturing right here at home," he says

CONTINUED



Dar•Ran Furniture, Inc.
2402 Shore Drive
High Point, NC 27263

toll-free | 800.334-7891

Dar•Ran - continued from page 6

proudly. “You don’t have to depend on a container to come over from China for anything—we can get you a new part in just five days if you need it.”

In addition, Jeff points out, Dar•Ran typically keeps its lines in production for at least seven to ten years. “Our dealers and their customers can always come back and buy more to match existing product, and you probably won’t have that choice with imports.”

Partnering with Dar•Ran is about a whole lot more than supporting the local economy, however.

“We’ve put a lot of effort in recent years into building business and brand awareness with the A&D community and that’s good news for our dealers today,” Jeff explains. “Offices are shrinking, work styles are changing and designers are looking for greater flexibility and customization,” he contends. “That’s where our design build approach really shines and it’s one key reason why Dar•Ran has become more and more of a specified line in recent years.”

For WPF dealers, Jeff maintains, that translates into major new sales opportunities in some key growth segments. Dar•Ran today enjoys strong market positions with banks and other financial institutions, law firms, colleges and universities, government and health-care, he points out. And the manufacturer’s strong emphasis on relationship-building means dealers targeting those opportunities can look to Dar•Ran for support on multiple levels.

The company’s own project management team is available to help dealers in bid situations and can put together quotes and 2D and 3D drawings, usually



within 48 hours and all at no charge to the dealer. High-end, full color renderings are also available to help secure sales.

Dar•Ran also offers a no-hassle freight program that helps make it easy for the dealer. While no furniture company is totally damage-free, Dar•Ran is currently running at only about three pieces of damaged product for every thousand pieces shipped. And Jeff says, as long as the dealer notes visible damage on the Bill of Lading when it happens, Dar•Ran will file the freight claim for the dealer and take care of whatever the freight carrier fails to cover.

Generous showroom packages and extensive product education and training are also important elements of Dar•Ran’s dealer support.

In addition to the company’s network of 18 independent rep groups nationwide, Jeff himself will be available to WPF dealers for training and end user calls on major project opportunities. And

comparison sheets and “Why Buy Dar•Ran” flyers are readily available from their Marketing Department.

“As a family business that has built its own success on nurturing relationships, we’re really excited about becoming part of the WorkPlace Furnishings family and strengthening our relationships with WPF dealers,” says Jeff.

“We offer an outstanding line of casegoods across a broad range of price points but Dar•Ran is about a whole lot more,” he stresses. “We’re a company that thrives on feedback from our customers and dealer partners. And we think WPF dealers are going to be very pleasantly surprised by the flexibility and openness to customization that we bring to the market.”

Sounds like WorkPlace Furnishings has got another valuable vendor partner in the mix. Time to get ready for more good news about sales and profit growth!