

# Preparing for recovery

By Marc Barnes



THERE'S NO place like home – and many observers within the casual furniture segment say that's where the growth will be when the recovery comes.

A spot check of manufacturers, retailers and other industry players led to two words of advice:

Needed are innovation, better sales training, and more effective marketing. And now is the time to get it in place.

Economies recover from recession, by improvements in the market, consumer spending, and jobs, according to Dr. Robert Gordon, an economics professor at Boston University with expertise in the industry.

The best news? Some positive signs are already being seen.

“Consumer spending has picked up around a little bit at the national level,” Fox said. “How much consumer spending continues to rise month by month and into the fall, to the extent that happens, will benefit the furniture industry.”

Veteran furniture analyst Jerry Epperson said timing will be crucial. “Part of it depends on when (the turnaround) occurs and part of it depends on the vigor with which it occurs,” Epperson said. “We will know pretty soon how people feel about early buys. Given the current environment and the current banking environment, we are



Epperson

not going to see the kind that we had in the past.”

If good news does come soon enough,

Rory Rehmert, vice president of sales and marketing at Pride Family Brands, said when the market does rebound growth will come in two ways, both from stylish, high-quality products and the effect of the refilling of the inventory pipeline.



Rehmert

“Inventory levels in our industry are at an unprecedented low and there will be a greater level of buy-in due to this,” Rehmert said.

That re-stocking will both freshen inventory and create enthusiasm for sales personnel, Rehmert said.

“The indications are very positive that our industry will emerge fairly quickly and well from the challenging months of the recent past,” Logan said. “We are expecting a very strong market in September and we are seeing lots of strong indicators.



Logan

People have money and they're starting

Hedgecock, director of business development for Dimension One Spas, who market higher-end goods, will work harder.

Innovation will be the path forward and not just quality, as big brands sell commodity products at ever lower prices,”

Future success will be con-

coupled with flexibility, vice versa when in



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didn't order enough to keep up.

the next six months

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said. “Anybody

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of the Pool &

center in Metairie, La., agreed the near-term will be important – and predicted that goods with mid-range price points will fare best.



Aronson

“I don't think we will come out of it in our industry that quickly,” Aronson said. “I think some people have learned buying

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