

The Business of Furniture | June 29, 2016

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**E Ink Will
Change
the Way
Space
Looks**



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AMQ has Right Products for Time and Place

The tech entrepreneurs and the Millennials making decisions are not as furniture brand focused as traditional companies. "They would rather spend money in other areas."

By Rob Kirkbride

Only the lucky few business owners have the corporate holy trinity: The right product in the right place at the right time. AMQ is one of them.

The Southern California firm has been very fortunate over the last three years. It has grown from a regional office furniture maker to one with a national presence as it has worked hard on its distribution network. It also has grown along with the trend toward open plan offices — from the East and West Coasts inland.

To capitalize on the open office trend, the company has identified a market need. "In the open plan, the time frame (how quickly you can deliver products) is much more important than price," said Bruce A. Mallett, chief executive officer. "Time frame is a driving factor. A lot of millennials are starting to make decisions (on furniture) and the time to get the product is such a driving factor today. They are used to a world like Amazon Prime. It used to be that

The company has its own industrial designers who create the company's own products.





delivery for Amazon Prime in two days was OK. Now people want it in one day or even a few hours.”

The tech entrepreneurs and the millennials making decisions are not as furniture brand focused as traditional companies either, according to Mallett. “They would rather spend money in other areas,” he said.

Mallett also understands that chief financial officers are driving decision-making as well. They know they can order office furniture products today and have them in 10 days. “My personal feeling is that the years 2008 to 2011 were so difficult that they altered their buying behavior,” Mallett said.

In a sea of sameness, AMQ is staking its claim in a small but growing section of the industry.

Place also has been important to AMQ’s success, Mallett said. Technology companies are much more accepting of the open plan than traditional companies. And AMQ is starting to see a little more acceptance in other parts of the country. That’s where the company has focused on adding to its showrooms and distribution facilities.

Add to these a completely open book management philosophy, and it all has made AMQ one of the fastest-growing companies in the industry. “Open book management is fundamental to AMQ’s culture,” Mallett said, noting his adherence to the principles outlined in the book “The Great Game of Business.” “The premise is that if you empower your employees like owners, they will act like owners. Diversity of thought is important to us.”

Every Monday, the company has a huddle where management goes through the numbers. That has created a strong foundation for the company’s exponential growth over the last three years, Mallett said.

It also helps that the company has its own industrial designers who create the company’s own products. While open plan furniture is critical to AMQ’s growth, the company also is work-

ing on ancillary products that deal with acoustics. One example is screens, which still keep cost per square foot down but make multiple generations in the office happy.

"We are definitely investing in R&D," Mallett said. "This company has so many ideas, and we are constantly conceptualizing new products. It is our job to identify those problems in the marketplace and how to help solve them."

AMQ is trying to make it less difficult for dealers by adding market segments to its furniture line. In addition to the accessories, it is adding seating and other lines to "make it easier to do business with us," Mallett said.

Still, all of it has to fit into AMQ's five-day open plan model that — like it says — ships open plan offices in five days. Mallett believes open plan furniture buyers want quick and easy transactions at a good price. So that's what the company is focusing on. Though it might sound like a simple philosophy, AMQ is thriving because of it.

Not bad for a company founded in 2009 in Santa Clara, Calif., by a group of industry veterans led by Mallett. In a sea of sameness, AMQ is staking its claim in a small but growing section of the industry. The company's promise to deliver open plan products in five days sets it apart. When designers ask: "Who is AMQ?" the company hopes the answer is, "The folks who will deliver an entire open plan office in five days."

It is not easy to grow a new brand, regardless of the simplicity of the message or the engagement of employees. For years, AMQ has been a West Coast company and has counted some of the largest tech companies as its customers. Google has 25,000 electric bases supplied by AMQ through its dealer.

Other customers include Auto Anything, Aviat Networks, Caesar's Entertainment, California State University, Encidia, Federated Media, LinkedIn, Marvell, Microsoft, Netlogic, Siemens, Solution Set, Sugar Publishing, TRS-RenTelco, Venadavo and Wave Systems, to name a few.

The goal, said Mallett, is to really help its dealers increase their margins. "That's a big deal for us," he said. **BoF**

