

Retail Technology Report



DFW Furniture's Andrew Robinson uses an online video to explain the difference between innerspring and pocketed coil mattresses.

Robinson offers tips to make online videos compelling

NEW ORLEANS — Here are a few tips from DFW Furniture's Andrew Robinson on making compelling website videos:

- ▶ **Demonstrate.** Don't be a talking head, he said. Show how a product's features and benefits work. Show off the lumbar support on a recliner, or how it fits a six-foot person comfortably.

- ▶ **Be authoritative.** Robinson took some time at a High Point Premarket a couple of years ago to interview Vaughan-Bassett's Doug Bassett and other supplier executives to video them about their brands and their American heritage. It gave DFW an opportunity to be the source for these stories and to show consumers that it's buying American and therefore helping American workers. DFW has also had its videos picked up by how-to websites and other sources.

- ▶ **Include key references,** such as store name, address, product name and key search words like "how to" and "what is the difference between."

- ▶ **Mine for contacts info** from consumers searching your content. Extend what Robinson calls "ethical bribes," such as coupon or a product guides that viewers get for filling out basic contact information, such as name and email. Robinson called attention to Gardner's Mattress & More of Lancaster, Pa., whose owner is a master of this, he said, with a video on its main page pointing consumers to a mattress buying guide that includes the type of information that guides consumers right back to Gardner's.

- ▶ **Be brief.** Robinson recommends no longer than 90 seconds for a video length. Attention spans are short, and Google gives content a higher value score when viewers watch whole segments.

- ▶ **Be ubiquitous.** Start with a YouTube channel. Tweet about the videos and post them to your website, Facebook, Pinterest and other social media outlets.

Retailer spurs traffic, sales by posting online videos

By Clint Engel

NEW ORLEANS — Years ago, when Andrew Robinson and his wife were running an online business that sold poker tables and home theater seating, their customer service person would become inundated with consumers asking questions over the phone, specifically about the theater seating.

So Robinson decided to make a YouTube video embedded on the website to answer these frequently asked questions, and see what would happen next.

"All of a sudden, the phone calls were cut by 50% and closing ratios started going up significantly," said Robinson, now co-owner of the 12-store Columbus, Ohio-based DFW Furniture.

That was Robinson's first of many online videos and one of the stories he shared with attendees of the Home Furnishings Industry Conference in New Orleans earlier this year. His session was part of a well-received marketing strategy workshop led by Bill Napier of Napier Marketing Group and also featuring Seth Weisblatt of the two-store Sam's Furniture and Appliance in Fort Worth, Texas.

Weisblatt and Robinson presented ideas and insights into this new wave of marketing, most tied directly to Google — from Weisblatt's success with Google AdWords to DFW's video channel on YouTube, a Google-owned business.

The overarching theme to both presentations: Consumers' decision making patterns have changed dramatically in this digital era, and furniture retailers need to change with them to survive.

Until fairly recently, a long-accepted marketing model involved three steps: stimulus (think television advertising); the point of sale, or what's considered the "first moment of truth"; and the second moment of truth — the customer's experience with the product after it's purchased.

In a video presented at the workshop, Google said a marketer basically needs to pay attention to these three steps to succeed. But there's now a new vital step in the process that Google calls the Zero Moment of Truth.

"That is when consumers do their research, get smart about alternatives, read reviews, look for coupons and comparison shop all before going to the shelf," the technology giant says in a video.

This new step has created "a whole new world we have to deal with," Weisblatt told the workshop attendees. Today in addition to, or sometimes instead of, that disruptive ad stimulus-type advertising, consumers are looking at reviews. They're checking with friends. They're watching online videos about the product. They're searching for comparisons — all before they ever come to the store.

"I can tell you in our store, it plays out that way every single day, and I'm 99% sure it happens to every one of your stores today," Weisblatt told the group.

"The customer comes in having found something online, and they want to see it. They want to know what you have that might look like it. That's the Zero Moment of

Truth. How do we get into that space?"

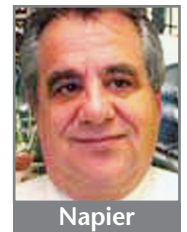
Sam's has moved into that space in a number of ways, including

online chat with consumers visiting its website and a highly effective paid search strategy on Google. The pay-per-click AdWords, combined with other effective search engine optimization efforts, results in the Sam's name and address being plastered at the top and elsewhere on a local consumer's online search result pages.

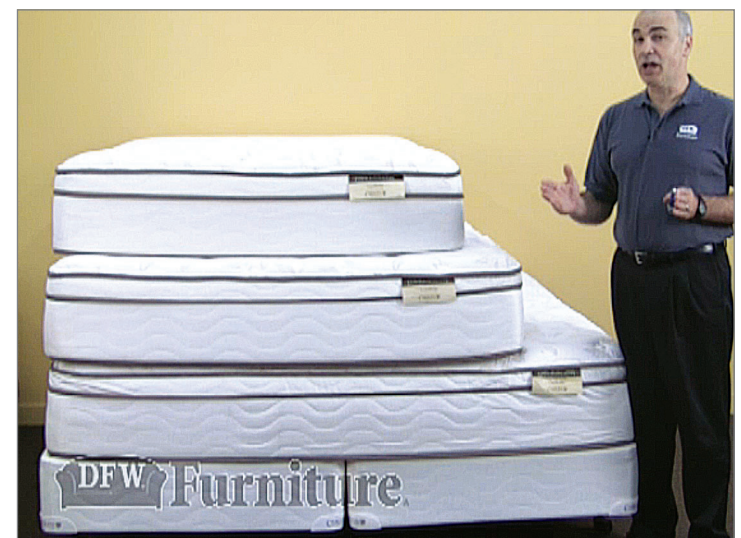
The lease-to-own specialist is averaging 70,000 visits per month to its website this year, up 300% from 2010. Some 65% of its ad budget goes to Google AdWords. The rest is a mix of direct mail circulars, online chat, participation in Wayfair.com's Get it Near Me advertising program, Facebook, YouTube and email marketing.

"It all revolves around getting (consumers) to my website so they can do the research," Weisblatt said.

During the workshop, he also pointed to research that showed how smartphones are changing the in-store experience. Indeed, mobile traffic to



Napier



Andrew Robinson of DFW Furniture, Columbus, Ohio, illustrates mattress sizes in a popular YouTube video on DFW's blog site. The video has been viewed more than 44,000 times since it was uploaded in September 2011 and has received plenty of positive comments such as, "Dude!!!!!! This helped me more than Google. Now that's saying something."