

Improving Lifestyles Every Day



COMMITMENT TO THE CUSTOMER'S CHANGING NEEDS AND DESIRES IS VITAL TO RETAIL SUCCESS, AND NO ONE DOES THIS BETTER THAN NEBRASKA FURNITURE MART. HERE, CHIEF STRATEGY AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICER JEFF LIND TALKS TO RLI ABOUT THE COMPANY'S GROWTH AND ITS UNIQUE BUSINESS MODEL.

The largest home furnishing store in North America, selling furniture, flooring, appliances and electronics Nebraska Furniture Mart was founded in 1937 by Belarus-born Rose Blumkin, universally known as Mrs B, in Omaha, Nebraska. With the motto 'sell cheap and tell the truth', she worked in the business until the age of 103. In 1983, Mrs B sold a majority interest to Berkshire Hathaway following a handshake deal with Warren Buffett.

The company currently operates a total of three large stores and a small showroom in Des Moines Iowa. The larger stores are located in Omaha in Nebraska, Kansas City in Kansas, and its newest and largest store in the Dallas Fort-Worth Metroplex (DFW) in Texas.

"With our opening of the almost 1.9 million square foot facility in the DFW area, our growth has exploded," says Chief Strategy and Development Officer Jeff Lind. "Prior to this we operated the two largest volume home furnishing stores in the US, each achieving around US\$450M a year in sales. The DFW store has exceeded our previous stores in revenue and is

projected to continue to grow rapidly."

As a truly unique retailer, which moves more volume out of each of its stores than most shopping centres, the perception of the Nebraska Furniture Mart brand has changed dramatically. In DFW it is anchoring a 433-acre development called Grandscape, which the company owns and is developing.

"This is allowing us to very selectively work with perspective tenants from around the world to build a spectacular shopping and entertainment venue unlike any other in the US," adds Lind.

The brand continues to evolve as customer expectations change but it works tirelessly to offer an unbelievable selection, great service and prices that are extremely competitive. In fact, it utilises electronic price tags and shops the internet everyday to insure its prices are the lowest. The result is an effective formula that holds great value for customers year after year. In addition, with Grandscape it is able to control its own destiny, creating a complimentary experience for visitors that enhances their lifestyle and fits in very well with the Nebraska Furniture Mart brand and the trends in retail today.





GRANDSCAPE, DALLAS, TEXAS, US



In order to remain at the cutting edge, the company is focused on three primary areas: firstly, creating an outstanding physical space for visitors – a place that is fun, immersive, engaging, relaxing and safe. It is also focused on finding the 'best of the best' in retail, entertainment, hospitality and attractions to create a one-of-a-kind tenant mix. "We are carefully curating the mix of potential tenants with the goal of maximising everyone's results in the development," explains Lind. "I believe this is a natural desire for us, being both the anchor and landlord at Grandscape, which is not typical of most developments. We are focused on the visitor experience long term, not just financial goals or banking and leasing hurdles."

Thirdly, the company remains focused on the technological experience, which will continue to evolve in the coming months and years. "Our driving focus in this area is the thought 'why should a technology experience be richer when a person is at home on their laptop versus in a physical space'. This effort is focused on meaningful experiences, not just digital displays here and there," he adds.

"Most social media strategies consists of a Facebook page, Twitter outputs and so forth – This is really missing the boat in my opinion. We will use many other strategies as part of our comprehensive plan to 'be seen' in a positive light in the social media universe."

Nebraska Furniture Mart's core values are Integrity & Honesty, Customer Loyalty, Quality Products & Services, Teamwork and Cost-Effective & Competitive. As America's largest home furnishings store, it helps people to fill their homes with quality, affordable items that help achieve the life they want.

To this day, the founder's mantra of 'sell cheap and tell the truth' remains the focus of the brand's ethos, whilst it strives to provide the biggest selection and the best service. Combining these philosophies and principles and putting them into action has helped the company to grow its business and generate lifelong, loyal customers. "We regularly survey customers and take action based upon the feedback," says Lind. "We consistently perform at a 98 per cent or higher approval rating. Through the years they have even helped us design store layouts."

So what lies ahead for the brand through 2016 and beyond? "We are very excited about creating a development in DFW that is recognized as one of the very best in the world," Lind smiles. "My team has been researching developments and prospective tenants from around the world; we believe that retailing has always been evolving and only the pace has changed. Staying at the front of the wave of change is extremely important, knowing what customers will want before they do, and being both willing and able to continuously improve will be key to our continued success."

