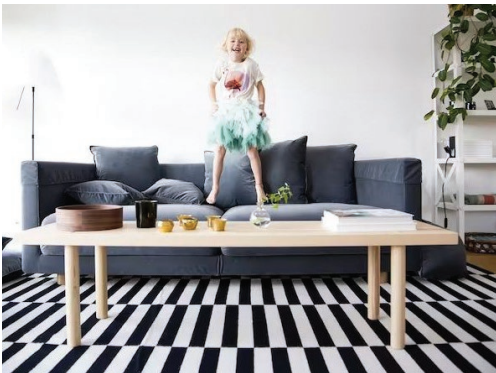


AMERICAN HOME FURNISHING ALLIANCE

# Marketing/PR CONFERENCE 2024



FEBRUARY 6-7, 2024 • GUILFORD TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONFERENCE CENTER

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## TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. **Registration/Light Breakfast** – Sponsored by Avalon Furniture

8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. **Opening Remarks / Welcome**

*Nathan Cressman, Chair, AHFA Board of Directors & President & CEO, Magnussen Home, Greensboro, NC*

8:40 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. **SESSION 1:** *Christy Hoskins, Vice President & CMO, La-Z-Boy Inc., Monroe, MI*



### **Changing the Way Consumers Think About La-Z-Boy**

Christy Hoskins joined La-Z-Boy as vice president and chief marketing officer in 2021 and spent much of her first two years guiding the company on a “journey to become a more dynamic, distinct and interesting brand that will serve a broader consumer base.” She’ll share the company’s rebranding journey and how the new, multi-channel marketing campaign, “Long Live the Lazy” is inspiring consumers to reimagine La-Z-Boy.

As vice president and chief marketing officer, Christy leads La-Z-Boy’s consumer marketing, digital commerce, innovation and consumer insights, as well as the corporate creative team. Previously, she held various marketing positions across brands and portfolios at Whirlpool Corporation and Nestle Purina Petcare. Her experience spans brand management, shopper and retail marketing and category management. She lives in Ann Arbor with her husband and two daughters.

9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. **SESSION 2:** *Kent Panther, President & CEO, Wray Ward, Charlotte, NC*



### **Navigating Home Building & Remodeling Trends**

Kent will review macro home building and remodeling trends, projections and other forces (economic, social-cultural and technological) curated from nearly 25 sources, plus category-level shifts likely to impact customer mindsets and motivations, such as the evolving meaning of home. After spotlighting these trends, he’ll project the implications for marketing home furnishings.

Wray Ward is Charlotte’s largest marketing firm, with clients including Bonefish Grill, Crescent Communities, Floor & Decor, GE Appliances, LEVOLOR, Stanley Black & Decker and Sonos. During his tenure at Wray Ward, Kent has overseen insights and brand strategy, client engagement, project management, resourcing and business development, fostering better connections between critical client acquisition, service and delivery areas. Prior to Wray Ward, he was the founder and president of Incite Communications, a strategic marketing communications firm.

10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. **BREAK** – Sponsored by FurnitureDealer.net

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 p.m. **SESSION 3:** *Kelly Peterson, Executive Sales Director, ROAR Forward, Charleston, SC*



### **Meet the Re-Imagineers!**

Kelly will present results of a first-of-its-kind study to understand a paradigm shift occurring within the 50-70-year-old demographic. U.S. consumers over age 50 are the world’s third largest economy, and they are connecting with new brands, products and services.

After 21 years with Hearst magazines, Kelly is now executive sales director for ROAR Forward, a Hearst Ventures partnership that has created a business intelligence platform dedicated to the Re-Imagineers. With more than 25 years as a group advertising director and a consultant to national and global brands, Kelly has the ability and perspective to advise clients on national marketing efforts, from initial concept through execution. She helped launch several media products at Hearst, including *Food Network Magazine* and *HGTV Magazine*.

11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. **LUNCH**

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. **SESSION 4:** *Tracey Kelly, Project Leader, Safer Life at Home, IKEA, Conshohocken, PA*



### **Home Furnishings at the Intersection of Health & Safety**

In 2019, IKEA launched its “Safer Life at Home” initiative to promote the company’s commitment to safe products from both a health and environmental perspective. The initiative’s first focus is on furniture stability with activities ranging from product development to safe use of products purchased on the second-hand market. Tracey Kelly, project leader for the campaign, will share how she works across the company’s entire value chain to promote IKEA’s investment in research, innovation, product development and testing, making product safety and sustainability key brand attributes.

Tracey’s career with IKEA spans decades and has included work for IKEA U.S. Retail, the Ingka Group and IKEA of Sweden. Recognizing the importance of stakeholder engagement, she established the public affairs function for IKEA U.S. Retail. As a member of the U.S. Retail Management team, she has led communications, public affairs, sustainability and human resources.



2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. **SESSION 5:** *Helen Sullivan, Communications Counsel, CertiPUR-US, McLean, VA*



**PR and Marketing as a Catalyst for Change**

In the upholstered furniture and bedding industries, the nonprofit CertiPUR-US program has been a game-changer in creating consumer demand for certified foam. Helen will shed light on the marketing principles that were instrumental in achieving their success – and how you can apply them to your own programs.

Helen has served as communications counsel for the CertiPUR-US® foam certification program since it was first established in 2008. The nonprofit program certifies flexible polyurethane foam used in upholstered furniture and bedding. Sullivan has developed successful industry-wide marketing programs for associations that serve constituencies as varied as sleep products, pasta, parking professionals and polyurethane foam. She taught public relations at George Washington University and is a founding board member of the American Writers Museum in Chicago.

2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. **COOKIE BREAK** – *Sponsored by Wright Creative Branding & Labels*

3:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. **SESSION 6:** *Jack Hicks, Partner, & Taylor Ey, Associate, Womble Bond Dickinson, Greensboro & Atlanta*



**What's Law Got to Do With It?**

Jack and Taylor will offer tips and describe potential pitfalls for the marketing professional navigating new tools and technology like Artificial Intelligence. They will look at product content and performance claims and discuss the legal ramifications of backing up what you say. And, just for fun, we'll also look at those allegedly trademarked blue-and-white checks and talk about "fair use," comparative advertising and infringement.

A partner in the Greensboro office of Womble Bond Dickinson, Jack has many years of experience as a furniture lawyer. He has guided companies through all stages of the intellectual property process; advised clients on advertising claims and comparative advertising guidelines; and obtained, litigated and invalidated patents, trademarks and copyrights on hundreds of furniture-related designs. Jack has served as an adjunct law professor at Elon University School of Law.



He is joined by Womble Bond Dickinson Associate Taylor Ey from the firm's Research Triangle, North Carolina office. She focuses her practice on privacy and data security matters that overlap with consumer protection laws in digital advertising and marketing. She uses her engineering background to help translate across business, technical and legal teams to identify solutions.

3:45 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. **SESSION 7:** *Mollie Surrat, CEO, White Label Studio, Atlanta*



**How to Leverage Influencers for Your Brand**

White Label Studio is a digital marketing and influencer agency that serves clients in the home and flooring industries. With over 30 national home industry brands, the agency has become a powerhouse digital marketing agency focusing on strategy, content development, influencer marketing and social media management. Mollie Surrat brings a business perspective to the manufacturer/influencer collaboration, ensuring the marketing objectives of both parties are met.

Mollie is the owner and CEO of White Label Studio and Haven Conference. White Label Studio is a full-service agency based north of Atlanta that serves the home and flooring industries. Mollie spent 15 years in corporate marketing, working for both Shaw Floors and later Mohawk Flooring. In 2017 she followed her entrepreneurial dream and founded her own agency, then joined forces with a former Mohawk colleague and established White Label Studio in 2019. In 2022, Mollie expanded the portfolio by purchasing Haven Community and Conference, an education and networking event for home décor and DIY influencers.

4:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **SESSION 8:** *Pat Bowling, Vice President of Communications, American Home Furnishings Alliance, High Point, NC*  
**Introducing Furniture Safety Week**

Learn how your company can help promote safe and healthy homes by participating in the new industry-wide initiative, **Furniture Safety Week**.

**GROUP DUTCH DINNERS**

*Thank you to our Sponsors!*



## WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. **Light Breakfast** – Sponsored by FurnitureDealer.net

8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. **Welcome Back**

8:40 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. **SESSION 9:** *Dennis Gatts, Strategic Accounts, Nfinite, Greensboro, NC*



### Results of 2023 Shopper Sentiment Research

Consumers have an abundance of choice when it comes to e-commerce, with countless brands and retailers vying for attention and “share of wallet” in the digital world. Research from Nfinite helps companies zero in on consumers’ deciding factors when they click “add to cart” by surveying 1,000 U.S. consumers each spring to ask their opinions on product visuals and online shopping tools. Respondents range from age 18 to 77. One thing is clear: Product imagery matters.

With a background in Fortune 150 companies, Dennis brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the brands and retailers he advises on how to leverage CGI and 3D technology to improve business results. Through extensive hands-on experience, he has gained valuable insights into the unique challenges and intricacies retailers and suppliers face.

9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **SESSION 10:** *Member Panel: The Power of Product Visualization*



**Moderator:** Doug Cottrell, Founder Clarity Web Solutions, Hickory, NC

**Panelists:** Andrew Crone, Chaddock; David Peterson, Gat Creek; Elicia Oliver, Riverside; and Andy Bray, Vanguard

Following an introduction from our moderator, Doug Cottrell, each panelist will have an opportunity to share their experience with 3D visualization and its impact on their business. We’ll leave plenty of time at the end for Q&A from our audience!

Doug founded Clarity Web Solutions in 2005 to fulfill his business passion to make life simpler for his customers and to build software solutions that work. He has over 35 years of experience in the software industry, spanning large public companies to small, private enterprises. His enthusiasm for making things smoother, more efficient and easier has extended to the world of 3D product visualization, and he has helped several clients navigate the complexities of choosing the right business partner for this important technology.

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. **BREAK**

10:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. **SESSION 11:** *Tanner Slepp, Vice President, Crobar Creative, Greensboro, NC*



### Onboarding for AI

Fasten your seatbelt for Tanner Slepp’s introduction to the new era of creativity and innovation fueled by artificial intelligence (AI). Learn how Crobar and its clients are using this new tool to jumpstart headline and copy inspiration and to create remarkable imagery to support marketing projects. He’ll leave us with a handful of “first steps” to help us navigate our way into this exciting new frontier. (Bonus: See step-by-step how they created the stunning cover of November’s *Interwoven* magazine!)

Tanner is a Vice President at Crobar Creative Leverage and has been a driving force in the agency for the past nine years. He is known for his forward-thinking approach and his embrace of cutting-edge technologies. His passion for AI and 3D technology has positioned him as a key leader in guiding Crobar on the integration and utilization of these innovative tools to enhance the creative process.

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. **SESSION 12:** *John Mims, Chair of Strategic Communication and Assistant Professor, Nido R. Qubein School of Communication, High Point University*



### Hiring and Keeping Young Marketing/Communications Professionals

John Mims, chair of strategic communication and assistant professor in the Nido R. Qubein School of Communication, will share the aspirations of today’s marketing and communications students; tips for managing them in the workplace; and advice on keeping them as engaged members of your marketing team.

John has been a full-time assistant professor in the Nido R. Qubein School of Communication at High Point University since 2016. In 2015 he served as an adjunct in both the School of Communication and the School of Business, teaching public relations and marketing classes. Prior to joining HPU, John had more than 20 years’ experience in both corporate and agency communications. He is an expert in crisis communications and social media and worked with students to form Ascension336, a student-run communication agency that works with non-profit clients.

12:15 – 1:00 p.m. **GRAB-AND-GO LUNCH**

### Brainstorming for next year’s conference!

Box lunches and networking for those who can stay, or grab-and-go for those with early afternoon departures.