



Bilmore collection

MEET MARK STEPHENS

With 11 years in the furniture industry, he comes prepared to propel an already high-performing Pride Family Brands into even more growth.

By Tom Lessor

Mark Stephens, named president of Pride Family Brands in March, has a diverse background and a focus on growing the company's business.

Prior to his promotion in March of this year, Stephens served as Pride's executive vice president of Sales for the previous six months, New Water Capital, a private equity firm, over Pride Family Brands.

Hearts & Home: You joined Pride Family Brands in September 2017, and six months later became president. Tell us about your career before this.

Mark Stephens: "I started my career back in '91, in consumer package goods with Ralston Purina, and then Pepperidge Farm, and Campbell Soup. Initially I was in Sales roles, then Customer Marketing, and Marketing roles. I joined the furniture industry back in 2007 with Furniture Brands International in St. Louis. My initial role was Sales and Marketing for Broyhill, and then I became president of Broyhill in 2011. I did that up until Furniture

Brands went into bankruptcy in September 2015.

"When we emerged as Heritage Home Group in November of 2013, my role changed. I was actually the only one on the Executive Leadership Team that stayed with the company at that time. They eliminated all of the brand president positions, and the company went to a functional organization structure—Sales organization, Marketing organization, Supply Chain, and so forth. So I took on Sales for all of Heritage Home Group. I had all nine brands that were under the portfolio, and I did that up until March of last year."

It seems that Sales and Marketing have been a consistent focus throughout your career.

Stephens: "Yes, I had some Operational experience as well. I was with Orlon Pest Control for four years. I started there in a business development role and then I ran part of their Midwest division, operationally, for a couple of years. That's what actually got me to St. Louis. With Broyhill, I had full responsibility across the business."



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Furniture Brands International and Heritage Home Group were primarily focused on the custom furniture business. Talk about the differences you see between the custom furniture business and the retail furniture industry.

Stephens: "The first obvious piece that the custom home scene is so different. Pride Family Brands' products are sold through a lot of specialty and pattern stores,

having to buy a container of product over seven months prior to the sales season.

"So, for one, I think the biggest challenge—coming from one end of the industry who's either understanding how that supply chain works and being able to support and leaving the retailer to maintain the risk while optimizing the opportunity and not leaving them short when the sales comes."

Your quick-ship program fully replaced our and based with your headquarters in South Florida.

Stephens: "We actually do quick-ship products of our brands. We get warehouse space right here at the corporate office and quick-ship Castelle out of Florida. Products that ship special order out of Costa Rica flow through that warehouse as well."

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Barley Day Bed



Hermosa Quarter Dining



Hermina Quarter Dining

What are we going to see at the Pavilion Show in terms of new products?

Stephens: "I will be all aluminum. It will be manufactured in Costa Rica at the same retail price point, in the consumer can see one they want and the price will be the same. More centrally done retail, we will introduce more retail made sense our design when the design makes sense."

"What's really exciting is that this collection gives a retailer the opportunity to show potentially four different looks while being able to ship one look to the store. So from a retailer's perspective, you can potentially show four different collections and sell them all. It's a great opportunity for us to be able to offer a retailer a lot of choice in their store, and we can offer a retailer a lot of choice in their store."



Palm Springs Chairs



Geometric Outdoor Dining Set—Palm Springs Collection by Castelle

which obviously aren't in the interior space. And the similarities is obviously a big difference between the two businesses.

"One of the things that I have found to be very different is just that the whole supply chain is managed. The specialty stores used to purchasing their stock early and then having that supply available when the season hits. The whole idea of an early buy program and making the purchases back in the fall for the season before the season, is unique to the outdoor space, whereas in the indoor space, it's much more consistent from a supply standpoint."

"I think one of the challenges that retailers in the indoor world who are trying to get into the outdoor space have is trying to adapt to that supply model. If you're an indoor retailer, you're used to not

Just like you're used to handling the majority of your sales volume, you're used to handling a lot of your competitors who are manufacturing in Southern Italy. You get a much more international feel from your manufacturing facility in Costa Rica or the U.S. market.

Stephens: "One of our greatest advantages is that we're producing in Costa Rica. Our lead time is anywhere from four to six weeks instead of 70 to 120 days, that is a big advantage from a supply standpoint. The year we also started having finished goods available from a quick-ship perspective, kitted products that ship within 48 hours. That's a great benefit to the retailer and the end user, but do for the customer needs, because you then have flexibility during the season with the customer and the demand. The dealer, being able to produce out of Costa Rica with lead times in a three- to four-week time."

"There are five Elements by Castelle, which is really great for your presentation to the retailer. We do carry quick-ship products in Asia, and we carry quick-ship products in Europe. The customer can see what we wanted to get a more consistent and a more reliable supply chain, and be able to do the West Coast as well as the East Coast. We're at the Home Depot facility for Florida. We have four fast-shipping collections that are available quick-ship out of Florida."

What are these being called Castelle collections?

Stephens: "That's our best-selling collection. It's a light, clean, and contemporary group. And then Roma and Montana. Montana is our best-selling traditional group, and Roma is a Roma modern collection."

Will all the look be aluminum in aluminum? Or is there one or two or something else going to show?

Stephens: "It will be all aluminum. It will be manufactured in Costa Rica at the same retail price point, in the consumer can see one they want and the price will be the same. More centrally done retail, we will introduce more retail made sense our design when the design makes sense."

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Orion Dining Table—Barley Day Bed Collection by Castelle

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that already is become the outdoor space is becoming a much more important. It's becoming an extension of the home. It's another room.

"We're seeing and finding an important design. When I was working at Broyhill back in 2011 and '12, retailers were always emerging part of what was their design.

"Her Edge was big in wood indoor

is established as a premium outdoor product. Castelle is clearly our presentation approach. We do carry quick-ship products in Asia, and we carry quick-ship products in Europe. The customer can see what we wanted to get a more consistent and a more reliable supply chain, and be able to do the West Coast as well as the East Coast. We're at the Home Depot facility for Florida. We have four fast-shipping collections that are available quick-ship out of Florida."

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How old is the Leona brand? When was it launched?

Stephens: "We introduced it back in the fall and really did not get into sites until about February or March of this year, so it's very much in its infancy."

"...when it comes to this product that is specific to hospitality properties, if we're given a drawing in the morning, we can have a physical sample by afternoon."

Mark Stephens



Harley Custom Dining

Hermina Quarter Dining

Orion Dining Table—Barley Day Bed Collection by Castelle

Barley Day Bed

Geometric Outdoor Dining Set—Palm Springs Collection by Castelle

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How important is that channel to you now?

Stephens: "It is an emerging channel for us. It's not to the size the design channel is. We've got some very large full-line furniture retailers in our portfolio, but the number of full-line furniture retailers accounts in comparison to specialty retailers is a very small percentage."

Which of the major online vendors, such as Wayfair or Pride Family Brands, working with these days?

Stephens: "We work with online vendors with a dedicated brand called Leona. That is our e-commerce brand, so it's unique product dedicated to that channel. We did that only through Wayfair. We have goods on One Kings Lane, and we're with Overstock.com, and actually there are a couple of other ones. Hayneedle would be another one."

We made the decision to run our e-commerce through a separate brand with dedicated collections. You won't see Leona collections on retail floors, and you won't find our Castelle collections on e-commerce sites.

Stephens: "Elements by Castelle will have four new collections there. Going forward, it will be an eight-collection program, and you'll see a consistent story across all of the collections. We're very excited about that. All eight collections will be available in our quick-ship program. Mixed media will be part of most of the collections that we go forward with."

Price-point wise, where does Leona fall in your product lineup?

Stephens: "It would be comparable to Castelle."

Isn't it amazing that the American customer will spend that amount of money on a product they haven't touched, sat in, or seen in person?

Stephens: "Yes, it surprises me as well. But at the end of the day, we don't choose how the consumer wants to buy, so we support it and we support our partners."

How many collections were part of Elements by Castelle when it debuted last year?

Stephens: "There were 12 collections."

So you are introducing four new ones and will go forward with eight?

Stephens: "That's right. We've eliminated