



Bill McLoughlin

Editor-in-chief

The most important thing as you automate, roboticize or augment ... is people

The pace of technological change is accelerating at a rate that is unprecedented in human history. New technologies, new forms and new platforms of communication are emerging, in some cases faster than companies can assess and implement them. The Wall Street Journal pointed out that it took the telephone 75 years to reach 50 million users, while in 2009 the game app Angry Birds did the same thing in 35 days.

In 2016, Pokemon Go, which demonstrated both a practical application and widespread consumer acceptance of augmented reality, took only 19 days to reach that number. By the end of that year, it had been downloaded by 500 million users, about 180 million more than the total U.S. population.

Since that time, augmented reality has gone from essentially a niche technology known to a handful of technophiles to actual implementation for some and an anticipated necessity at scores more.

Artificial intelligence, voice and facial recognition, and robotics are developing at such a rapid pace that most of you reading this will see the use of robotic sales assistants of some kind within your lifetime. You've almost certainly encountered their online counterpart — the chatbot.

Certainly there are financial and operational benefits to remaining technologically current, even cutting edge, and it's in almost every furniture retailer and manufacturer's best interest to move proactively along this path.

However, at the same time it's important to keep in mind that the purpose of all these technologies is to improve and enhance the life and/or shopping experience of the end consumer, which for the foreseeable future will be a human being.

Too often when technological implementation efforts begin they are aimed at achieving internal goals, process or workforce streamlining, cost reduction, achieving scale at a lower cost. Those are all worthwhile goals as long as they don't come at the cost of your customer.

Take as an example the ubiquitous automated voice messaging system. How many of you have gotten lost in a seemingly endless series of questions, prompts and menu choices only to throw up your hands and hang up. Ironically, it's now a differentiating benefit to tout live human assistance.

As you move inexorably down the path of ever-expanding technological sophistication, it's worth pausing occasionally to assess the impact of these "enhancements" from your customers' perspective. Have you added a level of convenience or complicated a process? If you're capturing more information, are you using it to assist or intrude? Does the customer view it the same way you do?

The purpose of technology is to serve people and not the other way around ... at least for now. **TT**

Bassett goes '4PL' with AGL

By Powell Slaughter
Senior Editor
@PowellSlaughter

BASSETT, Va. — Bassett Furniture is having a successful run going the fourth-party logistics route in a supply chain management partnership with American Global Logistics.

While third-party logistics providers manage selected supply chain customers, a 4PL assembles and manages all resources, capabilities and technology of an organization's supply chain.

Bassett has almost 1,500 products, including wood furniture, upholstered items and accessories, and it has a custom upholstery program aiming to deliver within 30 days. All of that is available through 100-plus storefronts, online or through in-home consultation.

With a variety of products, programs and channels, plus a global sourcing network, Bassett's supply chain is similarly complex. As a 4PL provider, AGL combines proprietary technology, logistics services and hands-on support to manage all aspects of Bassett's

global supply chain efficiently and effectively.

"Technology is the lifeblood of our supply chain — the flow of information and communication allows us to properly plan and execute our business," said Jeb Bassett, senior vice president for Bassett Furniture. "Our role as a manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer is uncommon in the industry, requiring precise planning to move goods from production to retail while meeting stringent customer timelines."

Unlike a third-party logistics provider, a 4PL oversees all logistics activity, regardless of which carrier is actually moving the cargo. In Bassett's case, AGL configured its technology platform to show each shipment's movement through the supply chain, beginning with the initial purchase order.

AGL's cloud-based technology and guidance has helped Bassett to trim costs while ensuring the prompt movement of its goods. For example, AGL works closely with Bassett's distribution centers and domestic trucking operations

to minimize accessorial fees and shipping delays. With AGL's support, Bassett has also earned beneficial cargo owner status, helping it gain more attractive pricing on ocean freight. As Bassett's sole customs broker, AGL also helps to ensure customs compliance and timeliness while keeping the company updated on best practices, such as accessing shipping data from the new Automated Commercial Environment portal.

"American Global Logistics is an extension of Bassett Furniture. We are a part of the same team," said Bassett. "They know our business, and they're dependable, reliable and predictable."

As the company evolves, AGL's 4PL approach allows Bassett to gain instant visibility into new suppliers and endpoints while developing creative transportation solutions to meet its high service standards.

"AGL's technology is simple to use," said Meredith Muscatello, director of global sourcing operations and logistics. "It fits Bassett, the way we're set up and the way we communicate." **TT**

King Koil names Bruneau EVP, operations

By David Perry
Executive Editor
@DT_Perry

WILLOWBROOK, Ill. — Top 15 bedding producer King Koil has named bedding industry veteran Ron Bruneau to the role of executive vice president of operations, a new position for the company.

Bruneau, formerly with E.S. Kluft, will oversee the implementation of King Koil's new strategy to build a domestic manufacturing infrastructure, officials said. Bruneau has more than 20 years of operations experience and has led operations with manufacturers Kluft and Talalay Global.

"As we continue to phase in our new manufacturing strategy, we continue to build a world-class team of leaders," said David Binke, CEO of King Koil. "Ron is one of the best operations and supply chain executives around, and I'm thrilled to have him steering our direction as we move toward opening our first factory this spring."

As executive vice president of operations, Bruneau will over-



Ron Bruneau

see the day-to-day operations to support King Koil's growth and expansion through strategic planning and goal setting, officials said.

Prior to joining King Koil, Bruneau was COO for E.S. Kluft, where he was a member of that company's senior management leadership team and worked alongside Binke to build that brand in the U.S. market.

During his six-year tenure there, Bruneau oversaw Kluft's increased production and helped grow the brand's global footprint, officials said.

Bruneau also spent 13 years with Talalay Global, where he started in the company's engineering department and was later promoted to production manager, plant manager, and then corporate director of fabrication and general manager for the company's operations in the West. **TT**

Pelcher

continued from p1

in Pennsylvania and Maryland," the Top 100 company said. He'll also join Art Van's senior leadership team.

Pelcher said, "I reflected further on the opportunities in front of me, and I wanted to help take the Art Van/Levin/Wolf brands to the next level. I'm looking forward to taking part in that growth story."

Art Van President and CEO Kim Yost said in the release, "We are thrilled to have Chris as a member of the Art Van executive team. His deep furniture experience will be a major asset as we continue to build our position as one of the largest and most successful furniture and mattress retailers in the United States."

Pelcher joined Levin Furniture in 2006 and has 25 years of experience in the furniture and mattress industry.

He said in the same release, "We have a unique opportunity to leverage our three brands' outstanding track records and reputations for providing high quality products and best-in-class service, in order to accelerate the growth of our combined businesses." **TT**

FurnitureToday

Business Intelligence for the Furniture Industry

FurnitureToday.com

Printed in USA
(USPS 330-630)
(ISSN 0194-360X)

Published weekly 52 times per year except for the 4/23, 7/2, 10/22 and the 12/31 issues with three issues produced on 5/9, 11/15 and 11/20 by Progressive Business Media, 7025 Albert Pick Road, Greensboro, N.C. 27409. Subscription rates (quoted in US dollars) US: 1 year \$199.97, 2 years \$378.97, 3 years \$547.97. Canada and Mexico: 1 year \$252.97, 2 years \$494.97, 3 years \$726.97. All other countries: 1 year \$410.97, 2 years \$799.97, 3 years \$1,178.97. Single copies US: \$10.00, market and special issues \$10.00-\$25.00. Single copies outside of the US: \$20.00, market and special issues \$20.00-\$35.00. (includes shipping and handling), prepaid US currency. Subscription inquiries: Furniture Today, PO Box 16659, North Hollywood, CA 91615-9519. Phone (818) 487-2015. Subscription requests may be made via email at subscriptions@furnituretoday.com, or to update/manage your subscription visit www.furnituretoday.com/subscriptionservices. Periodicals postage paid at Greensboro, N.C. 27409, and additional mailing offices. "FURNITURE TODAY" and "THE WEEKLY BUSINESS NEWSPAPER OF THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY" are registered trademarks of Progressive Business Media used under license. Progressive Business Media does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability to any person for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in the material contained herein, regardless of whether such errors result from negligence, accident or any other cause whatsoever. POSTMASTER: Send change of address to Furniture/Today, P.O. Box 16659, North Hollywood, CA 91615. Posted under Canadian International Publications Agreement # 40624074. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: APC, P.O. Box 503, RPO West Beaver Creek, Rich Hill, ON L4B 4R6. FURNITURE/TODAY copyright© 2018 by Progressive Business Media.