



## New vendors more aware of market options

By Matt Evans  
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HIGH POINT -- Some first-time vendors at the International Home Furnishings Market this week say that while High Point may still be the top show in the industry, they plan to scrutinize its worth carefully as they tally their orders next week. They will consider the cost of this trade show and the availability of promising options such as the new furniture market in Las Vegas.

While organizers at the International Home Furnishings Market Authority don't count the number of new vendors until after each of the twice-yearly events, each company choosing to display might be seen as a vote of confidence in the status of High Point's signature event, which contributes more than \$1 billion a year to the state economy. There has been widespread concern about the impact of the Las Vegas Market, which had a successful debut in July and aspires to grow rapidly in coming years.

Seth Cohen, national sales manager for silk flower manufacturer Silk Botanica of Brisbane, Calif., said his firm is coming to High Point this year to promote a new line of products aimed at the furniture and interior design trades.

"We walked High Point the last couple of shows" preparing for the launch of their new line, Cohen said. "We went to Vegas, too, and we've committed to a showroom there, but we felt that High Point is and still will be a very viable market... (Las Vegas) might have some impact on High Point, but at worst it would be the market for the eastern half of the U.S. But I believe there's room for two national markets."

**But there are other players.**

**Linda Kay Jones, co-owner of the Texas-based Pamela Worley Collection, said its proximity makes the Dallas Furniture Market her company's "must-attend" event. But since her company is just a year old, the owners felt they had to try High Point as well.**

**"We've known High Point's reputation for years, even before we got into manufacturing," Jones said. "We've heard about Vegas, and since we're in Texas, Vegas would be easy to get to. We don't know yet if we'll do both shows, but we definitely wanted to come here and see if this is the right market for us."**

Paul Borejsza, manager of Ontario-based home accents manufacturer Euroline Ltd., said his company had been to High Point several years ago and didn't have much success, which he attributes to a poor

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showroom location that he declined to identify. After hearing positive reports about High Point from colleagues lately, his company decided to try again after securing a spot in Showplace.

Borejsza said his company also showed in Las Vegas in that market's temporary exhibit space, and was unimpressed.

"The temporaries didn't have as good a show as the permanents, but it's still a new show with a lot of hype so we'll keep going," Borejsza said.

### **Cost is a real factor**

Ted Dash, president of Vietnamese manufacturer The Country Co., which has its U.S. presence in California, said he found more than hype in Las Vegas -- he found what he thinks will be the top furniture market in the nation soon. The Country Co. is showing in High Point for the first time now because of a growing distribution network on the East Coast; he thinks that in the future the Triad's market will be "more of a regional" event.

"High Point is great, but Las Vegas is setting up in a way that is very conducive for the dealers, manufacturers and guests to shop and work. High Point is spread out all over, and they do gouge you here," Dash said, referring to complaints of unfairly high prices at area hotels and restaurants during market. He said in Las Vegas they stayed in first-class hotels for half the price, and were able to take clients to lavish restaurants and shows instead of "walking around at the Wal-Mart."

Though he wasn't as happy with the Las Vegas show, Borejsza of Euroline said his company would be reviewing its success in High Point carefully after the show ends Oct. 26, weighing sales against the approximately \$20,000 they invested in attending. Jones of the Pamela Worley Collection will be doing the same thing, as the \$12,000 she's paying for her space plus the cost of flying in two staffers, hiring local help, securing accommodations and shipping in merchandise also brought her investment to about \$20,000.

"It's very expensive for a small startup," Jones said. "That's one reason to look at Las Vegas, the cost of shipping and staying there" would be less, she said.

One of the challenges for a new vendor like Jones is determining which small square out of the 12 million square feet of showroom space available in High Point will put her in front of the right buyers for Pamela Worley's high-end products. Her booth is also in Showplace, and while she likes the look of the location, traffic is what really matters.

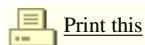
"We don't know if we need to be here or across the street or in a permanent showroom," Jones said. "Finding exactly where you need to be is part of the learning curve."

Cohen, of Silk Botanica, said that finding the right location, negotiating prices, hiring help and all the rest of the nuts and bolts of attending the furniture market may be a pain at times, but nothing

would deter his future attendance. He hopes organizers focus their efforts at promoting and improving the market squarely on those he says hold the event's future in their hands -- the buyers.

"In any venue, the most important thing is keeping the buying customer happy," Cohen said. "Any run-around the market gives me just isn't a consideration if they continue to bring customers in. They can run me around all day -- as long as customers show up."

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