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NEW MOVER

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The right time to establish brand loyalty.

by Michael Plummer, Jr.

For the first time in years, moving numbers are on the rise for two major reasons...

1. A robust economy means companies are hiring and folks are moving for jobs.

2. People (boomerang buyers), who foreclosed on their homes during the recession and waited seven years for their credit scores to be wiped clean, can now buy homes again.

This means countless Americans are accepting better and higher paying jobs, upgrading from apartments to homes, relocating to brand new communities... and finding themselves in the market for new home furnishing items.

The numbers don't lie. According to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) recent analysis of Census Construction Spending data, private residential construction spending increased over the summer to an adjusted annual rate of \$378 billion, the highest rate since the housing market crashed in 2008. Further, Epsilon's 2015 New Mover Report demonstrates that 60% of new movers wait to make household purchases until after the move – giving home furnishings and accessories businesses the perfect opportunity to gain new customers from new movers in their community. The report also states that furniture is by far the most popular type of purchase, followed by appliances.

63% of all moving-related purchases are made once people move into their new home.

Therefore, the time is now for home furnishings companies to make valuable offers to new movers who need home furniture and accessories.

The Power of Modern Day Housewarming Gifts

With so many people on the move in a world increasingly defined by insane work schedules, limited neighborhood interactions, and mobile/digital communication, home furnishings retailers have an opportunity to make lasting impressions on new movers by delivering thoughtful offers to their mailbox via personalized welcoming packages.

"93% of new movers said they would take advantage of an offer from a local business that took the time to welcome them to the community."

"It's up to local business

owners to fill the role once held by next-door neighbors, according to a recent survey of 300+ men and women."

According to a recent survey of 300+ men and women who have moved in the past five years conducted by our company, Our Town America, it's up to local business owners to fill the role once held by next-door neighbors. Consider the following:

- *More than half (53%) of recent American movers say that today's neighbors are not as friendly as the neighbors they remember as a child because they "seem too busy."*
- *Nearly 9 of 10 (88%) of recent American movers say receiving a housewarming gift would make them feel more comfortable in a new home/neighborhood, yet less than half (46%) have ever received a housewarming gift when new to a neighborhood.*
- *And more than 4 in 5 (81%) of recent American movers said they would have liked advice about their new community upon moving in...*

"According to the most recent survey, 1 in 3 new movers seek out home furniture options and more than 30% seek out home accessory options."

with 93% saying they would take advantage of an offer from a local business that took the time to welcome them to the community.

So, while the housewarming tradition of neighbors bringing over flowers or homemade pies may be a thing of the past, housewarming gifts still matter, and its local businesses who are filling the void... and generating customer relationships in the process.

OK - so why do all of these numbers matter to you as a home furnishings retailer? Well, like many things in life, learning from other home furnishings retailers is a great place to start.

Each year, we survey millions of movers to determine which kinds of companies and which industries are experiencing the most success using personalized new mover marketing programs. And in 2015, we have frequently found home furnishings companies among the top performers.

One trend driving this success is the growing percentage of new movers who are seeking out home furniture and home accessories as soon as they move to their new home. According to the most recent survey, 1 in 3 new movers seek out furniture options and more than 30% seek out accessory options. These statistics mean new mover marketing offers delivered on behalf of home furnishings retailers are as desirable as those delivered on behalf of restaurants, grocery stores and hair salons - the three industries that typically experience the best response.

So, to paint the picture more clearly and showcase what home furnishing retailers are doing to take advantage

of these trends, we interviewed a few of them on their experiences. Here's what these retailers shared with us that can help you visualize how you and your staff can capitalize on the impressionable new movers who enter your community each and every month.

New Mover Program Results

Tony Curtis-Wellings, Owner, Faraday's Kitchen Store (Austin, TX) offers one free \$10 gift certificate that can be used like cash toward anything in the store. Faraday's has consistently seen 15-20% monthly response rates, allowing their sales associates to earn the trust of hundreds of new movers. New movers appreciate the offer and most come back again. And if their sales folks can turn that into a lifetime relationship, that customer, on average, will spend \$1500-2000 at the store.

For furniture retailers who sell primarily bigger ticket items, a \$10 gift certificate may be insufficient. That's why Donna Ball, Owner, Georgia Furniture & Interiors of Savannah, GA offers new movers 40% off MSRP on any furniture item in the store. While Ball's team is just getting started with new mover marketing, she is confident the offer will help her store generate long-term, loyal relationships with northern "snowbirds" who move south in the colder months to buy homes on the Georgia coast.

Each of these retailers worked with an outside vendor to construct a thoughtful offer, and in some cases, an included follow up offer, that helps

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their business generate relationships with new movers. Here's how you can do the same at your store to take advantage of the rising trend highlighted throughout this article.

Five Tips to Build Effective New Mover Programs

Here is a quick-hitting list of five tips that any home furnishings company can use to launch a new mover marketing program:

1. Target multiple zip codes in close proximity to your store: As a home furnishings provider, your business has the potential to attract and retain customers who live outside of the confines of your local community. Target nearby zip codes poised for growth and/or zip codes that lack quality home furnishings stores.

2. Create a valuable offer that functions as a free gift: All too often, businesses offer an insignificant discount as opposed to a true offer, such as a gift certificate that can be used as cash or a free product from your store. Your offer needs to be compelling enough to get the new movers out of their new homes and through your doors. When it comes to generating in-store traffic and establishing long-term relationships with new movers, nothing is more powerful than a free welcoming gift.

3. Train your employees to capitalize on redemptions: Make sure your employees understand what your new mover offer is and train them to welcome these new movers and do their part in tracking the program so

you can monitor the program's effectiveness and connect with these new customers after their first visit.

4. Send a "thank you" and/or "follow-up offer": Speaking of connecting with these new customers, be sure to follow up and thank them for patronizing your business. Whether it's a simple 'thank you' or a secondary offer, the likelihood of establishing a long-term relationship is exponentially higher if the customer feels they are remembered, appreciated and welcomed back a second time.

5. Sign up with a proven, technologically advanced new mover marketing partner. It's important to work with a company that has tools in place to help you track offer redemptions and analyze the impact of the program.

Conclusion

It's an exciting time for home furnishings store owners as the thriving economy inspires countless Americans to move to new communities for quality job offers and upgrade their new homes with furniture and accessories purchased from local businesses. The time is now for home furnishings businesses to capitalize on personalized new mover marketing programs that help them engage with impressionable new movers and make them long-term customers.

About Michael Plummer, Jr.: *Michael Plummer, Jr. is President of Our Town America, the nation's premier new mover marketing franchise. A U.S. Army Veteran and Certified Franchise Executive (CFE), Plummer has more*

than 15 years experience working as a senior-level franchise executive and IT professional in the direct marketing industry.

For more than forty years, Our Town America has been providing new movers with traditional hospitality by mailing warm housewarming gifts from local neighborhood businesses in a premium welcome package. Since the company started franchising in 2005, Our Town America has consistently been placed in the Franchise Top 50, ranking #16 in 2015 for franchisee satisfaction.

It is Our Town America's mission to assist new movers adjusting to their community, help businesses gain new and loyal customers and provide franchisees with an excellent opportunity. The eight million households who receive Our Town America's welcome packages each year prove that Our Town America is committed to following through on that mission statement.

For more information on Plummer and Our Town America, visit the Our Town America website at www.ourtownamerica.com.

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