

WHITE PAPER SERIES

2

How Specifications Affect ROI

DESIGN FUNDAMENTALS: FF&E SPECIFICATIONS



How Specifications Affect ROI

ALL FURNITURE IS NOT CREATED EQUAL

In creating a compelling hotel experience, Return On Investment (ROI) is a focus shared amongst those selected to bring the infinite aspects of a hotel project together. With profitability as the investment goal, it becomes the challenge of purchasing and procurement, as well as, design to optimize efforts on behalf of ownership.

Furniture is a key component to the outcome and appeal of these efforts. Design creates the vision based upon ownership input, environmental considerations, logistics, and target market. Furniture manufacturers will be invited to review the specifications and submit their quotation or bid.

Stating that all furniture is not created equal can sum up the importance of what constitutes wide variation in manufacturers' quotations.

Beyond manufacturing quality, variables in furniture specifications can greatly impact cost. Among these variables are wood species, finishing types, metal types, stone tops and LED ratings. A key consideration given to seating and upholstery will be covered separately in a future publication. The information in this ROI publication is focused on case goods and occasional furniture.

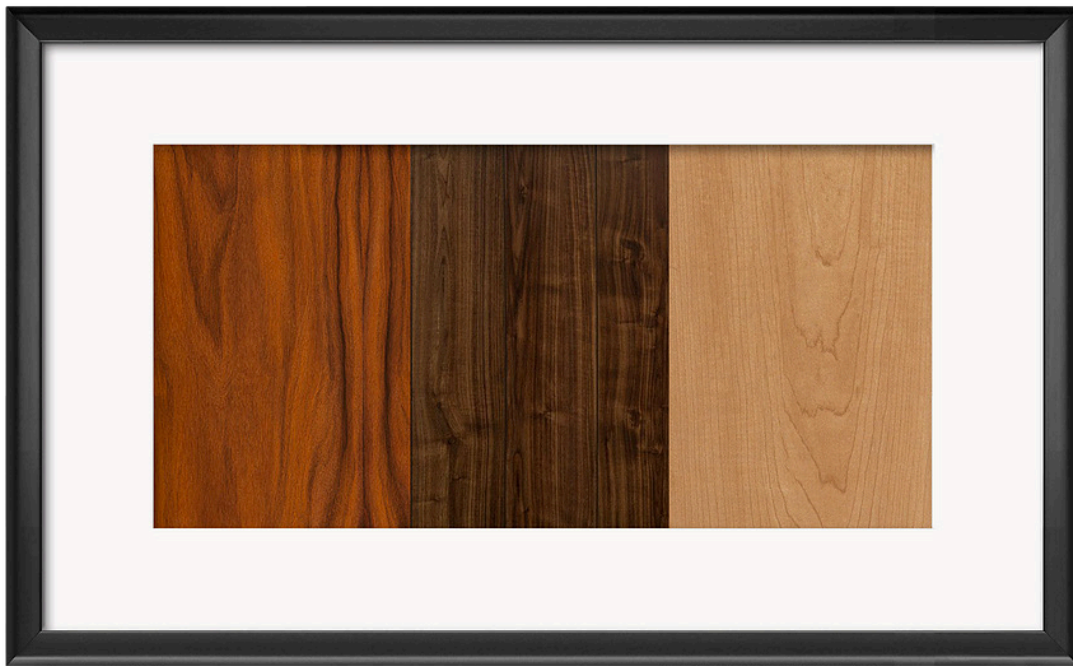
Case goods are referred to in a number of ways. According to Merriam Webster, "Case goods: furniture (such as bureaus or bookcases) that provide interior storage space; also dining room and bedroom furniture sold as sets." For purposes of this paper, we are referring to furniture made of hard materials such as wood, metal, glass or stone; pieces that have exposed frame and are not upholstered.



SPECIFICATIONS

In this competitive hotel market, hotel owners and purchasing firms rely on the designer to specify product that will create a unique and special environment for their clientele. The wow factor and visual impact of the initial experience is critical. However, design aesthetic and engineering of product must go hand in hand to achieve long-term functionality and durability.

Ultimately, value is paramount in selection of product that satisfies both the design concept and durability within budget. This is where knowledge becomes critical in design specification. Lack of understanding the underlying attributes that bring best quality to a project can be responsible for painful failure.



WOOD SPECIES (Above: from left to right: ROSEWOOD, OAK & MAPLE)

In consideration of fusing wood for furniture, hardwoods (coming from deciduous trees such as maple, walnut, mahogany) versus soft woods (coming from coniferous trees such as pine, cedar, spruce) are more desirable in producing durable, high quality product.

It is important that a distinction is clearly specified between a desired wood species versus a artistic representation of that species. As an example, with use of finish and various techniques, a very capable manufacturer can create the appearance and character of a more costly, more exotic wood species starting with a clean, white wood such as maple. In this case, the ROI is increased with the ability to achieve the desire look appeal of creative and interesting furniture.

VANEERS

A wood veneer is a thin slice of wood cut from a log. Normally thinner than 1/8 of an inch, the veneer is then bonded or glued to another surface (typically wood or MDF).

Understanding the properties of wood veneers and ways in which they enhance product design can lead to enduring value. In addition to the distinctive and exotic look that can be achieved by using wood veneers, stability and durability is a key advantage of working with veneered MDF (Medium Density Fiber board) panels. Solid wood must be used in the appropriate areas of furniture to create the correct balance of strength and durability. Solid lumber is subject to warping and splitting due to expansion and contraction caused by environmental elements such as moisture and temperature. The quality of wood veneer glued to a strong substrate of plywood or MDF stands up to the elements while offering unique character in countless variations.

FINISHES

Using hardwood may call for different forms of finishing. Importantly, not all finish types are equal in quality. ROI is increased with the use of high-grade commercial quality finishes that are hand applied, burnished and glazed as required per design intent. Polyurethane (PU), the hardest and strongest finish material available, is best used for optimum results as a topcoat in sealing and protecting the finish.

Although not truly waterproof, the water resistant properties of PU make it an ideal choice for commercial settings and moist environments. In serving the long term needs and values of hotel property owners, a manufacturer's use of PU for endurance and lasting beauty of their furniture is paramount.

MARINE GRADE PLYWOOD (Shown Below)

A component often overlooked, but critical to successful vanity and bathroom furniture construction is marine grade plywood. Unlike standard plywood, marine grade is comprised of higher quality, water resistant hardwood glued together using waterproof adhesives. This alternative will help avoid mold and rotting that are destructive in wet environments. While this material is not commonly specified, it is hopeful that the furniture manufacturer will suggest the importance of using it on behalf of the ownership. Although a more expensive option, ROI is unquestionably realized using marine grade plywood.



METALS (Shown Below)

Incorporating metal into a furniture design scheme can add subtle beauty and interest while enhancing furniture products, componentry, accent pieces, etc. There is a wide array of metal finishes available to all genres of hospitality.

Stainless steel, an alloy comprised of various metals, is widely used in the industry for furniture design. It is a strong, durable, quality material that will not rust or pit and can be finished in a variety of ways. In order to provide long-term benefit from stainless steel, it is critical to understand and specify the appropriate metal for the particular environment.

While stainless steel may appear the same on the surface, the nickel content is the component that may determine success or failure of a given product. The higher the nickel content, the better the quality of steel and resistance to water and humidity.

As an example, an important distinction can be made between two quality stainless steel metals, #201 stainless and #304 stainless. While both have the same appearance, #304 with the higher nickel content, is the optimal choice for bathroom vanities and damp environments because it will not rust or corrode. While #201 is less likely to rust than other metals, its lower nickel content makes it more susceptible to issues such as standing water and moisture.

Needless to say, there is significant value in using the more expensive #304 with far greater ROI. Unfortunately, not all manufacturers address this issue and may rely on the specifier to call out the appropriate metal.

Another use for stainless steel is its ability to replace chrome. Here again, value and ROI is noted in favour of stainless steel. Chrome is a difficult, multilayered process that is very costly, environmentally challenging and subject to rust, peeling and flaking. The luster and shine of chrome can be achieved on stainless when properly polished with greater durability, far less cost and none of the risk.



QUARTZ

Quartz slab is a man made, engineered stone that is formed by combining mostly ground natural quartz stone with a small percentage of resin. There are many advantages to quartz as a table or counter top in the hospitality environment. It can be created in almost any colour, it is equal to the hardness and strength of granite, is non-porous, stain resistant and extremely durable.

The attributes of quartz are excellent for hospitality, making it a popular alternative to granite. An important measure of quartz quality is the Mohs Hardness Test. With many brands of quartz available now, this test provides a standard for hardness, scratch resistance and strain resistance. This is done by comparing the resistance of the quartz to (10) other referenced minerals, verifying the durability and quality of the stone as a validation of ROI.

LED (LIGHT EMITTING DIODE) TECHNOLOGY

Lighting quality plays a pivotal role in atmosphere throughout a hotel property. In addition to addressing practical and functional needs, lighting establishes a mood and creates drama while highlighting any given area. LED technology offers important benefits to hoteliers. While upfront cost of LED lighting is higher than that of traditional light bulbs, the long-term benefits and cost savings of this state of the art, energy efficient technology, offer great ROI to hoteliers.

The application of LED in furniture can bring an artistic impact to design while emitting a subtle, practical ambiance. Whether it be a stunning headboard wall with integrated lighting, an amenities cabinet with just the right illumination, or a nightstand infused with sensory automation, LED provides a clean, sophisticated touch.

The low voltage, low heat, and extreme durability of LEDs make it the correct choice for furniture design and value.

However, an extremely critical aspect of integrating this technology in the realm of furniture manufacturing is safety. Enough emphasis cannot be placed on sourcing LED product with correct UL standards for use in furniture, both for the sake of ROI as well as public safety. Specifying LED from lighting manufacturers who adhere to these codes and standards will avoid the fire marshal inspection nightmare of a shutdown. Far worse, it will eliminate the potential and horrific consequences of fire. This is common knowledge to a furniture manufacturer with the right experience and best interest of all parties involved.

CONCLUSION

The individual components addressed in this document highlight their critical role in the overall success and longevity of hospitality furniture. Knowledge is power in understanding the impact of incorporating these elements towards the most positive results. Awareness of quality differences will help maintain an essential dialog among manufacturer, design and purchasing professionals on behalf of ownership while ensuring the most favourable outcome for all.

