

Sleep Savvy

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the magazine for sleep products professionals

Colors of Comfort

Learn about the psychology behind the 2024 colors of the year and how to use them in retail settings



RETAIL ROAD TRIP

We head to Frederick, Maryland to check out Mattress Warehouse, the second-largest independent bedding retailer in the U.S.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

How to boost sales by communicating the value proposition of pillows to consumers

The Value Proposition of Pillows

With many consumers watching their spending, retailers can boost pillow sales by focusing on feature-filled offerings – and merchandising them the right way

BY JULIE A. PALM

PILLOW PRODUCERS SAY THAT TO SELL BETTER

-quality pillows — and more of them — right now, your focus should be on value and giving consumers clear reasons to purchase offerings that can provide them a great night's sleep.

“For an inexpensive opening price point pillow, you’re going to get what you pay for. However, consumers are willing to pay more for a pillow that they perceive will add some type of value. This is why you’re seeing more emphasis on constructions, treatments and other ways to offer those value propositions,” says Ken Brown, vice president of sales for the consumer products division at Richmond, Virginia-based Carpenter Co.

Not everyone, of course, can afford pillows at the highest end, which can cost \$200 or more.

“Customers are still shopping at the high end, but many customers in the middle have dropped down to lower price points with changes in the economy,” says Jesse Gibbs, vice president of national sales for Malouf Home, a sleep products company with headquarters in Logan, Utah. “We’re working on opening price point options for price-sensitive consumers, with technologies to match price points and preferences.”

Offering feature-filled pillows that address an individual's sleep needs can entice consumers of various income brackets to buy a new one — from those who are ready to splurge on an entire bed ensemble to those who may want to upgrade their mattress but can opt only for a new pillow right now.

Problem-solving pillows

Consumer-pleasing pillow features include hybrid constructions, temperature regulation, adjustability, unusual shapes, cutouts, organic and natural materials, aromatherapy and more.

Purecare has been packing its pillows with sleep-inducing features, says Sarah Bergman, chief marketing officer and senior vice president of product development for the Phoenix-based sleep accessories producer.

The company has added “three unique constructions to help retailers further expand their success with CBD-related goods,” Bergman says. They include “a down-surround construction, an adjustable loft option (ideal for adjustable base customers) and a new concept meant specifically for side sleepers,” she explains. Each pillow features a cover treated with Suncliff's premium CBD and retails for \$220 in a queen size. A bottle of CBD spray is sold separately.



Product Spotlight



FILL IS STILL A FAVORITE Some consumers prefer a polyester-filled pillow. Carpenter Co.'s Indulgence brand has a downlike feel and a 100% cotton cover.

**NEW COOL**

Purecare's Shattered Ice pillow has a cool-to-the-touch cover that the company says impresses shoppers during demonstrations.



GET COMFORTABLE Blu Sleep calls its Comfy pillow "a game changer in the world of comfort products."

Phase-change materials and ventilating construction techniques offer the cooling experience that so many sleepers crave. They've become a staple of today's pillows — more of a standard rather than a trend. It's no surprise that so many best-selling pillows focus on cooling.

Purecare's Shattered Ice pillow has "been exceptionally popular" since the company introduced it last summer, Bergman says. "It features a unique cooling cover treatment for an incredibly simple demo in stores," she says, "and the \$99 (queen-size) retail price point makes it a standard add-on for retail sales associates."

Blu Sleep's signature gel foam pillow, Ice Gel is 300 times more breathable than conventional memory foam, according to the company. "A Toyobo Japanese cotton, stretch, padded cooling cover leaves an instant refreshing feeling," says Elizabeth Dell'Accio, president of Blu Sleep, a producer of a full line of sleep products based in Pompano Beach, Florida.

Many premium pillows are constructed with various types of foam or down, but Carpenter's Brown says there's still a market for polyester-filled products, too. Once sold exclusively by a single retailer, Carpenter's top-selling flagship Indulgence pillows are now available to other dealers. Indulgence pillows are filled with a synthetic down and have a 500-thread-count, 100% cotton cover. "This is a value-add pillow assortment, so regular (retail) price points will be over \$35," he says.



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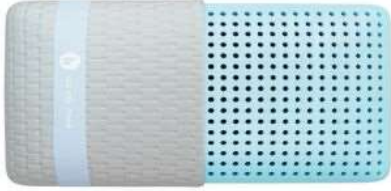
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Product Spotlight

REFRESHING

Ice Gel is one of Blu Sleep's bestselling pillows, with breathable gel foam and a cooling cover.



ONLINE SALES MADE EASIER

E-COMMERCE PILLOW SALES CONTINUE TO

increase, in part because of the convenience of online shopping and sellers' generous return policies, says Elizabeth Dell'Accio, president of Blu Sleep, a producer of a full line of sleep products based in Pompano Beach, Florida.

When enticing consumers to buy pillows online, it's all about high-quality photos and videos, detailed product descriptions and customer reviews, pillow producers say.

"The selling platform doesn't matter: The goal is to have the product make that emotional connection with the potential buyer. What's going to get their attention within 2-3 seconds? For online ... typically the first line must get their attention," says Ken Brown, vice president of sales for the consumer products division at Richmond, Virginia-based Carpenter Co.

To boost sales of better quality and higher-priced pillows through e-commerce sites, Dell'Accio offers these other "musts" for retailers:

- LIVE CHAT SUPPORT
- EXCLUSIVE ONLINE OFFERS
- SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT
- VIRTUAL TRY-ON TOOLS
- INFORMATIVE BLOG CONTENT
- RESPONSIVE WEBSITE DESIGN

"Malouf offers content sheets for all our SKUs, which makes it easy (for online sellers) to add new products to their website. Customer reviews are also important. They help establish trust and credibility for the end consumer," says Jesse Gibbs, vice president of national sales for Malouf Home, a sleep products source with headquarters in Logan, Utah. "Lastly, investing in an advertising strategy helps drive more traffic to their site to increase sales," he says. "There are a variety of platforms and ways they can approach their ad spend. Malouf offers high-quality creative assets that they can use as part of their strategy."

New to you

The winter Las Vegas Market is typically a don't-miss event with many sleep products manufacturers set to roll out their biggest launches of the year. Here's a look at just a sample of the pillows that retailers will be able to check out Jan. 28-Feb. 1.

○ "MEANINGFUL SLEEP SOLUTIONS"

Carpenter will introduce an assortment of "value-add" pillows and toppers under its relaunched flagship brand, Comfort Tech, Brown says.

"Consumers are willing to pay more for a pillow that they perceive will add some type of value."

"The pillows within this assortment were developed to not only bring value but to offer meaningful sleep solutions that retailers and the end consumer are desperately looking for," he says.

The new Dual Comfort Foam pillow is part of Carpenter's Comfort Tech line. One side incorporates the company's bestselling Serene performance foam; the other side features its newer Tranquility foam. The pillow also includes an antimicrobial treatment and a temperature-regulating cover.

"The Serene foam side offers the perfect amount of comfort and support, due to the Supportive Air Technology. It's like sleeping on air. The Tranquility foam side offers increased support with an active response," Brown says. "So, the customer gets two distinctive options for comfort and support. This is important because comfort needs can vary, and giving consumers a choice — in this case, a customizable choice — is always the best value."

○ COMFY AND COZY

Last summer, Blu Sleep previewed its Comfy pillow "designed to provide sleepers with the utmost coziness and support."

"This pillow is a game changer in the world of comfort products," Dell'Accio says. "Our Comfy pillow is expertly engineered to respond to sleepers' every touch and movement. Thanks to its unique foam composition, it effortlessly molds



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Product Spotlight

to sleepers' bodies, offering support and cradling their head and neck in heavenly softness."

Now with packaging, a production timeline and both price and minimum orders set, the pillow will launch in Las Vegas this winter.

○ THE DAWN OF A PILLOW

Also in Las Vegas, the Santa Barbara, California-based bedding brand Dawn House will highlight its Dawn House pillow, featuring CertiPUR-US-certified memory foam with bamboo and charcoal infusions. The plush, supportive foam controls both odor and moisture, with airflow channels providing ventilation, says the company, which is part of adjustable base specialist Ergomotion.

○ A WEIGHTY INTRODUCTION

A merger of pillow and blanket, the Shloof pillow offers "the benefits of a weighted blanket's deep pressure stimulation

with the comfort and spine-aligning attributes of a body pillow," according to the company, which will be showing in the home furnishings temporaries during the Las Vegas Market. The 10.8-pound pillow incorporates beads in the center. It's available in a 52-inch by 20-inch version. The company says other sizes are in the works.

If you're heading to the Las Vegas Market, put pillows on your shopping list. You'll help your sales — and your customers. ○



Julie A. Palm has been covering the mattress and home furnishings industries for more than 25 years and is a past editor in chief of both Bed-Times and Sleep Savvy magazines. As lead word-smith at Palm Ink LLC, she specializes in writing, editing, publications management and communications consulting for a variety of clients. She can be reached at japalm623@gmail.com.

SELL MORE IN-STORE

HERE ARE SOME PRACTICAL

ways you can increase pillow sales at your brick-and-mortar locations.

Merchandising

○ **PICK THE RIGHT LINEUP.** Too many pillow choices "give the end consumer analysis paralysis," says Jesse Gibbs, vice president of national sales for Malouf Home, a sleep products source with headquarters in Logan, Utah. "Customers are lost because there are too many options. We recommend a clean, concise lineup with variety, but not an overwhelming amount of options."

Carpenter Co.'s Ken Brown says retailers also sometimes hamper rather than help pillow sales by offering too many similar products "at retail prices that don't match the value of each pillow."

"If you don't give the consumer a reason to step up in price, they will ultimately not do it," says Brown, vice president of sales for the consumer products division at the Richmond, Virginia-based company. "Then it becomes a race

to the bottom, or how cheap can you sell something to get them to buy it."

○ **LOOK FOR MORE THAN A PRETTY PACKAGE.** When choosing pillow vendors, Brown suggests paying careful attention to the producer's packaging. "Another misstep is not having the packaging focus on the best or most compelling selling features, no matter the price point. What's going to help the customer make that ultimate decision? Is it thread count, the brand, warranty? Or is it emphasizing the solution-based selling features and benefits? It's the 'why buy' that truly matters," he says.

Carpenter develops its pillows based on "true sleep needs," Brown says, and then designs packaging that makes those "innovative materials and constructions" understandable to a consumer, whether a retail sales associate is available to help them select a pillow or not. "Without the proper packaging message, products will get lost, especially value-add products that offer a wide range of features and benefits," he adds.

○ CREATE AN INVITING DISPLAY.

Blu Sleep and Malouf are among the pillow sources that offer branded displays for their pillows and other bedding accessories, or you can create your own displays. Whichever option you choose, the key is to create an inviting destination that attracts attention and makes it easy for shoppers to compare and test pillows.

○ **BUNDLE UP.** Packaging and selling pillows with other items — from mattress protectors to sheets to other linens — increases the average sales ticket and helps customers build a complete bed ensemble. Malouf helps retailers by offering "a cooling bundle, natural bundle, deluxe bundle and value bundle, and we customize the product based on (a retailer's) lineup," Gibbs says.

Education

○ **FOCUS ON THE MOST USEFUL INFORMATION.** Retailers should give RSAs the training and information they need to explain pillow profiles, shapes, components and constructions to consumers, says Elizabeth Dell'Accio, president of Blu Sleep, a producer of a full line of sleep prod-



FOR A GOOD MORNING The Dawn House pillow includes CertiPUR-US-certified memory foam with airflow channels for ventilation and cooling.



BEST OF BOTH The Shloof body pillow incorporates the features of a weighted blanket for soothing pressure and the rectangular shape aids spinal alignment.

ucts based in Pompano Beach, Florida. Educational signage, product testing stations and other tools can supplement that RSA training and give shoppers additional information they need to make the right decision for them.

Gibbs agrees product education is important. “We’ve invested in different training materials so RSAs have everything they need to understand the features and benefits of our pillows,” he says. “Our sales team and sales reps also work closely with our retail partners to set them up for success every step of the way.”

Sales strategy

○ MAKE AN EARLY INTRODUCTION.

One mistake brick-and-mortar retailers sometimes make is to consider pillows an afterthought, Gibbs says. “Retailers may not talk about the entire sleep experience, and they don’t bring up the accessories or the essentials early and often in the conversation,” he says. “... We always recommend talking about the complete sleep experience, and how a pillow is so important to a good night’s sleep. The pillow is a crucial piece and makes up 30% of the overall sleep experience.” Retailers who sell a lot of pillows typically start the bed



SHOW OFF Blu Sleep offers a compact, eye-catching display for its colorful foam pillows.

rest-testing process not at the mattress array but at the pillow display.

○ **ASSESS THEIR POSITION.** Many sleepers benefit from a pillow designed to match their preferred sleeping position: back, side or stomach. So, start by asking shoppers about that, pillow makers say. Blu Sleep has found that

most side sleepers prefer medium- to high-profile pillows roughly 5½ inches to 6 inches thick, Dell’Accio says. Back and stomach sleepers, she says, typically rest more comfortably on a low-profile pillow that’s roughly 4½ inches to 5 inches thick.

○ **ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS.** “The best way for an RSA to help a customer choose the right pillow is through an informative and consultative approach,” Gibbs says. In addition to asking about a preferred sleeping position, RSAs should determine shoppers’ other needs. Do they sleep hot and flip their pillow over throughout the night? Do they have allergies? Do they want a pillow they can launder often?

○ **TEST IT OUT.** Once shoppers choose a pillow they like, have them carry it with them as they try different mattresses. The consistency limits the number of variables they need to consider when rest-testing and helps them bond with the pillow, increasing the chances that they’ll want to buy it along with the bed. Be sure to keep disposable covers on hand so each shopper has a fresh, hygienic surface for their head.