

Furniture Today

April First Tuesday anticipates busy Premarket

Exhibitors said timing event resulted in smaller attendance



[Thomas Russell](#) // Senior Editor, Furniture Today • April 7, 2021



Lane Home Furnishings showed this new upholstery group in a light gray fabric with coordinating tones on the pillows and accent chair. The 95-inch sofa in the center retails at \$499.

HIGH POINT – Despite an expected lower turnout of retail attendance at this month's First Tuesday, exhibitors were glad to be open for business to those who did make it to town for the April 6 event.

Unlike some prior events, which had them open starting on Monday through Wednesday, many showrooms were open only Tuesday, with some cutting the day short as appointments dried up.

Others said they were staying open through Wednesday or even Thursday as they planned to be in town anyway. Still, coming off the Easter weekend with just two weeks until Premarket, many said they expected traffic to be light.

“We have select dealers visiting us this week, and we are expecting a very busy Premarket,” said Jason Blalock, who handles sales and marketing at [Crown Mark](#).

He said while the company was showing some new wood product including at least two new dining sets – and expects to have much more new product at Premarket – much of the focus this week was on inline goods now available or expected to ship soon.

“We are focusing on what we have in stock and are flowing, along with some new items,” he said, adding that the company maintains its stocking position in its warehouses in Pomona, Calif., Houston, and High Point. “Retailers are focusing on suppliers that can satisfy the consumers’ demand immediately.”

Klaussner continued to filling specific category needs at First Tuesday, this time with a spotlight on stationary leather upholstery. On display were three new 100% leather sofas available in 75 leathers cut and sewn at Klaussner’s plant in Asheboro, N.C.

“Our stationary leather business continues to see good growth since COVID-19,” said Vice President of Marketing Len Burke. “It’s a category people ignored for years, and now that consumers are willing to spend more on their home we have seen a big increase in our leather business both stationary and motion. With growth in the stationary leather category within the industry, we have also had some key customer acquisitions that had contributed to our increase.”

Between First Tuesdays and its quarterly ‘Klaussner on the Road’ video and digital presentations, so far this year the company has launched more than 25 new groups comprising more than 65 SKUs.

Martin Svensson Home, which just announced its new home office line, had one of those groups on hand for First Tuesday as well as one new bedroom. But most of the showroom featured inline goods including some of its bestselling bedroom and dining collections.,

While the company didn’t have any firm appointments, it was open for walk-by traffic.

“We had a couple of people in for the last show, and we feel like this is one of those things that will gain momentum as we go through time,” said Bill Hall, vice president, sales for the Eastern region.

Hall noted there will be much more new product at Premarket. In addition to the new home office line, the company will have new home entertainment consoles and new occasional groups available.

Jay Quimby, executive vice president at Lane Home Furnishings, said the company also had a mix of new product in various categories as well as inline goods.

“We continue to have new product,” Quimby told Furniture Today. “I am a big believer that you have to have new product if you have buyers coming in.”

He said Lane was expecting about a dozen dealers Tuesday through Thursday. In addition to showing them new and inline goods, he said the event was a good opportunity to meet dealers in person in a safe environment to discuss important issues ranging from challenges with supply chain to opportunities for the balance of the year.

“That is what the industry is trying to figure out – what’s next?” he said. “How do we sustain this growth and how do we get back to appropriate service levels. Also how do we market and understand the needs of the consumer because they are changing by the day.”

Looking towards Premarket, he said, some 90% of the company’s 90,000-plus-square-foot showroom will be new product.

“Buyers are looking for fresh ideas,” Quimby said. “With this incredible demand and focus on the home, it has sped up product (development) cycles. ... What we are focused on at Lane is what’s next, and we are planning for a very robust fourth quarter and first quarter 2022 in what is a changing environment.”

Sunpan also was open this week. While it did not have product it was showing for the first time, it expects more to arrive for Premarket across many different product segments, including wall art, lighting, rugs and other accents.

Roland Maddrey, key accounts manager, said that First Tuesday is part of an ongoing effort to be open Monday through Fridays to buyers who happen to be in town.

“We want customers to have access to our showroom,” he said, noting that the company is expecting a particularly strong Premarket. “It has taken a little while to get the message out, but we continue to spread the word.”

To be able to have access to a showroom between markets, he said, raises the comfort level for those still wary of being in large crowds. It also allows customers to see Sunpan for the whole host of categories it offers, from upholstery and wood living room furniture to bedroom, dining and office furniture as well as rugs, wall art, lighting and accessories.

“We’ve got a great location, and we want to get the word out that you need to shop Sunpan,” he said.

Leather upholstery resource Niroflex said it only had one customer as of Tuesday afternoon, but it was pleased to be open nonetheless.

“They (customers) don’t come in just to walk around,” said Michael Elkhatib, president. “They come in to do business because business is good.

“I think that First Tuesday is going to last,” he added. “Having High Point just two times a year is too much of a big investment.”

He added that while he expects many more customers during the upcoming Premarket, being open for First Tuesday in recent months has allowed Niroflex to open some new accounts of late.

“They are looking to replace some collections and are looking for new vendors and new options,” he said. “It is no waste of time if you are able to show them something,” whether that means inline or brand new product.

Motion vendor Master Motion continued to have success with virtual First Tuesday appointments via Zoom, with between six and eight one- to one-and-a-half -hour virtual showroom visits each day, starting at 8 a.m. and with the last appointment at 8:30 p.m. President and CEO Michael Nanni said he’s seen a change in timing of visits.

“We never had many evening appointments before the pandemic, now my most popular time is for a virtual showroom visit is 5-8:30 p.m. after people have returned from work,” he said. “This way they can meet and not

miss out on anything that had planned for the day to run their business. Some met when they got home after work, after dinner, or when they knew they would be undisturbed. All other co-workers on the call can be home as well.”

Senior Editor Powell Slaughter contributed to this report.



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