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Bedding dealers seek innovation for sales edge

AT THE MARKET — Retailers found some winning sleep accessories and mattress lines on their market visits here, producers reported.

They said the retailers were looking for innovative products that can give them a sales edge in the big bedding retail months that

loom ahead. Memorial Day is the kickoff of the important summer selling season, one that is shaping up as a strong one, producers said.

Therapedic's dealers are responding positively to the High Point debut of the company's new Tommy Bahama Home Collection, according to Gerry Borregine, president.

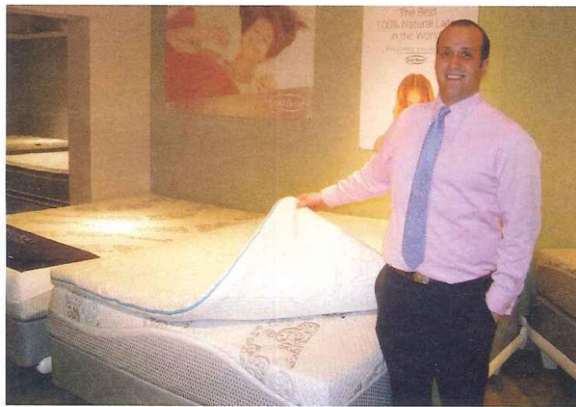
"Overall traffic at market is not what it used to be, but it's good enough for us to want to come back again," he said. "We've done quite well. The seeds that we planted in Las Vegas with our Tommy Bahama line bore fruit here. This is a good example of the markets working in tandem."

Paramount Sleep is receiving

"a very positive response" to the formal launch of its new Hypnos luxury bedding line, said James Keen, a Hypnos executive from the United Kingdom who was in the Paramount showroom to help show the line to retailers.

He said Paramount refined its Hypnos offerings following an initial showing in Las Vegas earlier

this year that drew valuable insights from retailers. The revamped line features more natural materials, including camel, horse hair **p22**



Skip Naboicheck of Gold Bond holds the corner of a Vytex natural rubber latex topper on top of a new Vytex latex sleep set.

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and alpaca comfort and support layers. The line retails from \$3,999 to \$10,999 and is designed to appeal to consumers in all key demographic groups, Keen said.

Gold Bond's introduction of Vytex natural rubber latex, which the company said is free of allergy-causing latex proteins and non-rubber particles, is a market hit, said Bob Naboicheck, president. "The retailers loved it," he reported. "They prefer it to what they have or what they were buying from us before."

Retail pricing for the new beds, which Naboicheck said provide "the most durable, purest and most natural latex" on the market, ranges from \$1,699 to \$3,499.

Adjustable beds also are doing well here.

Gold Bond unveiled its most adjustable-friendly innerspring bed, while Enso Sleep Systems is displaying its new En-Motion line of adjustable bed bases, retailing from \$499 to \$1,499. Those bases are getting "a fantastic response," said Mark Akerman, Enso's president.

Reverie is doing well with its new starting adjustable bed base, the 3E Tech, which offers head and foot adjustability and retails for \$999 in queen.

"We believe there is an unmet demand from the \$999 to \$1,499 price band," said Lisa Tan, Reverie's chief marketing officer.

Rush Mattress introduced a line of adjustable power bases, and is offering a baker's dozen special in which the company gives retailers one free extra RushRelaxer with the order of a dozen of the beds.

"The new collection features four adjustable bases that are designed to meet the needs of all consumers, from the value conscious

to the most discerning," said Harry Goodman, president of Rush.

Sleep accessories producer PureCare, exhibiting in its new permanent High Point showroom, said market has been good.

"It's not Las Vegas, but we didn't expect it to be Las Vegas," said Sean Bergman, chief marketing officer at PureCare. "We saw the right people and had a good market. It was a quality show."

"Market has been really good,"

added Mike Douglas, general manager for Malouf, another sleep accessories producer. "We had a lot of traffic. Retailers are looking for what is new and interesting to move the needle in their stores."

Bill Hammer, president of high-end bedding producer Shifman, said his company "had some really good meetings" with its dealers. A new Shifman mattress designed specifically for platform beds was a hit, he said.