

## [GRAND PRIZE WINNER] FURNITURE WIZARD

THE TYPICAL SALES EXPERIENCE IN A RETAIL furniture store works like this: a salesperson and customer walk the showroom floor, browsing bedroom sets, dining tables, large appliances; the list goes on. The store representative, in addition to helping sell the merchandise, laboriously writes by hand information associated with each item selected, including price, color, size, fabric, description, etc. "The task is total drudgery, time-consuming, inefficient and slows the sales process," recalls Martin Fischbein, president and founder of Furniture Wizard Software.

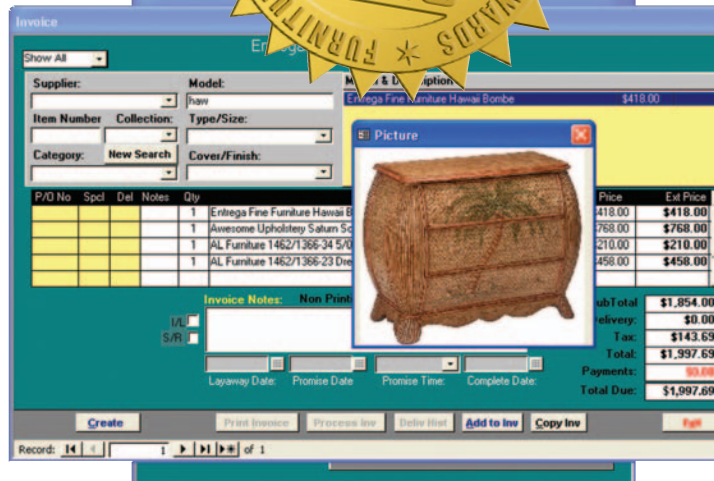
Marty should know; he's worked in furniture retail for nearly two decades, and before that, large appliance retail, using the pencil and paper method to sell merchandise. Then, in the early 1980s, he purchased a DOS-based software solution for his store. It was supposed to help alleviate some of the difficulties involved in selling, tracking and inventorying furniture and other large appliances.

"It was a total nightmare," he explains. "There were too many steps for what should have been simple tasks," and some features did not work at all.

Marty hired a software developer and they worked together to develop a solution specifically tailored to the needs of a furniture retailer. "I realized soon after that I really liked writing software code, and began programming my own automation processes for the store," he says.

### A SOLUTION IS BORN

In 1997, the company Furniture Wizard Software was born out of Marty's home-grown solution of the same name, leading to his exit from the retail fur-



niture industry and entrance into the start-up independent software vendor arena.

Furniture Wizard Software was an instant hit with other furniture retailers in Marty's area. Today, the company has 7 employees and operates out of offices in Chula Vista, California. Furniture Wizard Software is used by more than 700 retailers across North America, and a few abroad, including customers in the U.K., and even Qatar. Business is mostly referral-driven, with end-user stores ranging from standalone locations to as many as 12-unit chains.

The software solution is housed on a PC server, operates in a Windows environment, and according to Marty, brings total automation to the point of sale (POS) operation. Coupled with a Bluetooth scanner from CipherLab, it allows employees to walk the sales floor with their customers and scan items of interest. The scanner's software component, a firmware solution dubbed Scan-IT, took Furniture Wizard about six months to design. It allows the scanner to keep a running total of purchased items, and displays multiple fields of information, including a full description, product supplier, quantity in stock and selling price.

"Furniture descriptions can be rather verbose," says Marty. "We taught the scanner to scroll not only up and down but also left and right, so the user can read a long description." The sales person can switch the scanner's screen from one item selection to the next, allowing the customer to review all the pieces that were of interest.

When the customer makes the final purchase decision, the user

- **VERTICAL MARKET:**  
Furniture Retail
- **SOLUTION:**  
Furniture Wizard Software
- **COMPANY:**  
Furniture Wizard  
Chula Vista, CA  
[www.furniturewizard.com](http://www.furniturewizard.com)

hits a button on the scanner, which then triggers the POS system to produce an invoice. The invoice is ready and waiting in the printer by the time the associate and customer arrive at the checkout. And if the requested item is not available, the software instantly creates a purchase order to speed up availability and delivery to the customer.

Adding to its appeal, the solution can be deployed via the Web. "We've developed an application that listens for the IP address of the scanner and talks directly to the server. In this way, the scanner communicates with the server, whether it's local or across the Net," says Marty. The user can have a show floor in New York City, and a server housed in Los Angeles, but the scanner still performs sales operations in real time.

Furniture Wizard Software also allows the scanner to read dual bar codes, those created by the Furniture Wizard system and the corresponding UPC code from the manufacturer or supplier. The software also teaches the scanner to associate one bar code to another, so when it reads the



*The Furniture Wizard system automates the sales process for the furniture retailer C.G. Sparks.*

pieces, antiques and imported goods. The retailer installed the Furniture Wizard System in 2002, and store manager Michael Hennessey instantly found value in its time-saving ability. It allowed him to inventory his entire store in four hours time; a task that normally consumed four people for two days. The most beneficial use of the system, says Hennessey, is its ability to "keep the dia-

price tags, invoices, and purchase orders," explains Marty.

Then his team burns the software onto a CD and ships it, along with any peripherals, including the CipherLab scanner and DYMO printers, to the retailer. Furniture Wizard also supports receipt printers, cash drawers and credit/debit processing. "We go on site in less than five percent of installations," Marty explains, adding that most of the support is handled via telephone or Internet.

Marty is pleased with his solution's ease-of-use. "Our competitors' solutions require a significant learning curve, while ours can legitimately get up and running in a matter of days, from the first time we get a call that they're interested. Once they receive the CD, it's about a five-minute installation."

As for expansion, "one niche we're getting more involved with is mattress sales, but we're really ideal for all facets of the home furnishing industry," says Marty. "Basically, anything that requires selling inventory, where special orders are involved — from furniture and appliances to spas — that's the focus of our application."

But according to C.G. Sparks' Hennessey, "This system isn't for everyone; it's only for people that want to make their business run smoother and easier." ■

**"We are thrilled to have been selected as the Grand Prize Winner of the 2005 Specialized Retail Solution Awards. Thank you for the honor."**

**MARTIN FISCHBEIN, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER, FURNITURE WIZARD**

supplier's code for a particular item, it's immediately paired with the corresponding Furniture Wizard code.

In addition to POS processes, the solution automates tasks such as inventory, receiving, transfers from one location to another, and retagging sales floor items.

### INSTALLATION MADE EASY

C.G. Sparks, a furniture retailer in Salt Lake City, Utah, specializes in handmade

logues flowing with the customer while I'm creating their invoice."

As for installing the system, Marty says this couldn't be simpler. The total turnaround for installation is 48 hours — from the time a retailer first contacts Furniture Wizard to their having a customized solution installed and up-and-running. "We take elements of the retailer's identity — their logo, graphics, colors, fonts, etc. and embed them into the output of the software for personalized