





# Larry Furiani

COASTER CO. OF AMERICA, SANTA FE SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

**For Coaster Furniture's Larry Furiani, the professional is the personal with rent-to-own dealers across the country and on Capitol Hill.**

**By Tiffany Hamburger**

**F**or the past 30 years, California-based Coaster Co. of America has been a big player in the wholesale import furniture industry. While the company is still a wholesale furniture distributor, to say that its business is the same as it was 30 years ago couldn't be further from the truth.

Coaster, a longtime rent-to-own vendor, has done a lot of research in the intervening years, working to improve the selection, costs, distribution and quality of its products for 10,000 dealers, including those in the rent-to-own industry. To do that has required an understanding of both the supply and consumer sides of the equation, something about which Larry Furiani, vice president of dealer relations, can talk at length.

"Our goal for the rental industry is to create a cost-effective, well-designed, well-manufactured product that can withstand the normal rigors of daily use," Furiani says. This attention to "suitability for intended use," as Furiani terms it, is one way Coaster excels. The company works to meet the expectations of its clients and that includes enforcing strict quality-control standards. "Coaster is a respected supply-chain partner [with rent-to-own] because we've invested a great deal of capital, time, effort and energy to improve the production process," he says, adding that many firms outsource these roles, where Coaster does not.

Instead, Coaster maintains salaried, local employees to define and ensure quality at the point of manufacture and to assure that the quality is consistent. "It's the way we do business," he says, "and not everyone does business this way, because it's expensive. It costs

us more, but it saves us so much more—in returns and defects." And, he adds, this "is critical to the rental industry, because [rental dealers] don't want shoddy workmanship. Once it gets in the hands of the consumer, it's way too late and way too expensive [to address quality issues]."

Furiani takes special pride in the company's supply-chain management, both for its efficiency and speed. He notes that his contacts in the rent-to-own industry emphasize urgency, something he says Coaster's system works to satisfy. To do this, the company maintains seven warehouses in the U.S. and one in Canada, each stocked with approximately 3,000 home furnishings. "The expectation [for rent-to-own dealers] is that if they partner with a company like ours, whatever they need, we should be able to supply them quickly, cost-effectively and with a sense of urgency," says Furiani.

Keith Ferriman, director of purchasing and inventory for Ohio-based Showplace Rentals, attests to Coaster's progress. "They're shipping on their own company trucks now and products are more reliably available," says Ferriman, adding that "stuff rolls through the warehouse more fluidly now."

Though Coaster has a diverse client base, including retailers and the military, Furiani notes that the company has "a partnership—a synergy—with the rental dealer based on economies of scale and a sense of urgency." To that end, the company has been working to cultivate personalized relationships with its rental dealers.

"We're getting ready to run a bedroom set that I would never have guessed we would run in rent-to-own," Ferriman says, "but Coaster

WHY SOME  
PEOPLE THINK

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**VIRGINIA**

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**WOOLF**

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IS THE STATE'S  
OFFICIAL ANIMAL.



Portrait of Virginia Woolf  
*Navalis urticae, not Canis lupus.*

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came to us with it and...offered it to us at a killer price." He notes that deals like this help to expand Showplace Rentals' product categories and help his business to stand out. But Coaster's commitment to these relationships goes even further, says Ferriman. "They were one of three vendors who actually showed at a spring meeting of the Ohio Rental Dealers Association board of directors," he says. "They came to us and said, 'You pick your deal. What do you want to run? We'll special that item.' It was awesome."

In addition to its relationship with individual rental dealers, Coaster, an APRO associate member for 10 years, has been an active player in legislative efforts and industry buying shows. "Larry Furiani...has been [one of the most avid] promoters of the positives of our industry that I've seen coming out of the furniture category," says Ferriman. "He went to the APRO Legislative Conference this year and pledged significant levels of support for our industry. I don't know if a lot of people know that, but it's pretty impressive and we certainly appreciate his involvement."

When asked about his commitment to APRO and the industry, Furiani explains the logic of the partnership—but he also highlights the unique passion of those in rent-to-own, identifying it as something that Coaster wants to support. "[Coaster] recognizes that these are hard working guys who have individually...devoted themselves tirelessly to the support and success of their industry," he says. "We feel so strongly about the value it offers to the community, the benefits it offers—and that's why we chose to participate at a higher level."

Furiani, a Southern California native, is a second-generation home-furnishings businessman, having started his career with his family's domestic manufacturing business. With his lifelong immersion in the home-furnishings industry, for Furiani, the professional is the personal. "Throughout my career, I was always involved with industry trade associations," he says. "I found that to be a tremendous opportunity for developing business relationships and social interactions. So a lot of my social time, for many years, was involved in my industry and my enjoyment many times was enhanced by my trade relationships."

Furiani married this past year and, as someone who spends free time enjoying the California coast, he still commits much of his personal time to his industry, especially to the charity City of Hope, to which the home-furnishings industry serves. "I've been doing that for my entire career," he says. Furiani emphasizes that he considers his career as something to be thankful for. "I've had the luxury of being in this industry my entire career," he says. "I'm very fortunate." ✧

*Tiffany Hamburger is a freelance writer based in Austin, Texas.*