

Marketing/PR

CONFERENCE 2025



**PRESENTED BY
THE AMERICAN HOME FURNISHINGS ALLIANCE**

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WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. **Check-In/Registration/Light Breakfast** – Sponsored by **ANDMORE**

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. **Opening Remarks / Welcome**

Andy Bray, 2025 Chair of AHFA's Board of Directors & CEO/President, Vanguard Furniture, Conover, NC

8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. **SESSION 1: 2025 Consumer Insights for the Evolving Home Industry**



Jaye Anna Mize, Vice President Advisory & Partnerships, Fashion Snoops, New York

Jaye Anna Mize and the team at Fashion Snoops have examined the key consumer behaviors, technological advancements and cultural trends that are set to shape the home landscape in 2025 and beyond. In addition to revealing how these dynamic shifts impact how we live, work and design, Jaye Anna will offer valuable insights attendees can use to align their product offerings and their marketing strategies with these trends.

About Jaye Anna: With nearly 20 years at the global trend forecasting agency Fashion Snoops, Jaye Anna is a creative strategist, brand leader and trend analyst with a passion for innovation, storytelling and design. In her current role, she combines expertise in consumer behavior, design and AI-driven insights to guide brands toward transformative growth and innovation. Her ability to translate socio-cultural-economic trends into actionable strategies has helped clients such as Unilever, Kohl's, Target, Mattel, BuzzFeed and Scott Living capture new market opportunities and drive revenue growth. With Scott Living, for example, she helped develop the brand with Drew and Jonathan Scott of Property Brothers, leading to a multi-tier licensing program at Kohl's. Her focus on aligning design, merchandising, marketing and product development with a cohesive vision has been instrumental in shaping other multi-million-dollar product launches and brand transformations.

9:45 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. **SESSION 2: Google Insights to Turbocharge Your 2025 Marketing**



Josh Banfield, Senior Partner Lead, & **Shea Browning**, Advertising Executive, Google, Chicago

From gathering ideas to comparing prices to making buying decisions, many of today's home furnishings shoppers are using Google at every step of the purchasing process. And all along that journey, Google is tracking search data. This session will reveal omnichannel insights gleaned from furniture, mattress and home remodeling shoppers. Attendees will learn how shoppers are using search and YouTube for inspiration, research and buying.

About Josh & Shea: Josh is on a mission to try every Old Fashioned in Chicago – but when he's not sampling cocktails, the Senior Partner Lead at Google is focused on driving significant retail growth through innovative marketing strategies, including omnichannel sales and loyalty programs. He's been at Google 10 years. Shea is an advertising executive at Google partnering with Fortune 500 retailers. She works with brands to empower their omnichannel sales strategy, bringing the best of Google solutions to her customers. Shea has been at Google for 15 years. Prior to that she worked in the advertising agency space, specializing in performance and affiliate marketing.



10:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. **BREAK** – Sponsored by **Furnish Near Me**

11:00 a.m. – 11:45 p.m. **SESSION 3: From Aisles to Interiors: Applying CPG Branding to the Home Décor World**



Sol Garay, President, BDI Furniture, Chantilly, VA

As President of BDI Furniture, a leading designer and manufacturer of innovative, modern home furnishings, Sol Garay oversees all aspects of business operations, driving growth, innovation and strategic direction for the brand. With over 25 years of experience in the home furnishings and consumer goods industries, she has a proven track record of growing iconic brands, including McCormick, Williams-Sonoma Home, Pottery Barn and Gap. She is known for her ability to seamlessly align creative vision with business objectives and has a unique talent for empowering high-performing teams to deliver exceptional results. She'll share proven strategies from consumer packaged goods marketing that are relevant to today's home décor world.

About Sol: Sol's passion for design and home décor runs deep, stemming from work in her mother's home décor shop starting at just 13 years old. This hands-on experience ignited a commitment to blending design, business and branding in ways that resonate with consumers. Before joining BDI, Sol served as Vice President of Global Creative & Brands at McCormick Inc., where she led global marketing teams and played a pivotal role in expanding the company's brand portfolio. Her leadership was instrumental in shaping McCormick's marketing strategy and elevating the brand's presence worldwide. Beyond her professional life, Sol is an avid explorer with a love for discovering new places, art, foods, stores and cool brands. Her curiosity fuels her personal and professional growth, inspiring her to push the boundaries of what's possible in design and branding.

11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. **LUNCH**

1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

SESSION 4: Why We Need More Marketing in Ecommerce



Josh Walter, CEO, BrandJump, Los Angeles

BrandJump is an ecommerce agency with a focused expertise in the home furnishings space. In this session, CEO and co-founder Josh Walter will provide actionable strategies for marketers to work with their ecommerce and sales teams to protect and drive their brand. He'll cover distribution strategy, customer targeting, digital product assets, retail media and customer experience – all with a focus on helping your brand stand out in a crowded online market.

About Josh: Prior to co-founding BrandJump in 2011, Josh served in business development at LIGHT, a decorative lighting sales agency. He has an MBA and a law degree from Pepperdine University and is a member of the California Bar. He is a frequent speaker and guest on podcasts that focus on ecommerce and business excellence.

1:45 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

SESSION 5: The AI-Powered Marketing Era and Tools You Can Use Now



Matt Ritter, Assistant Professor of Strategic Communication, Nido R. Qubein School of Communication, High Point University, High Point, NC

In this session, Matt will offer a balanced look at integrating AI into home furnishings marketing, showcasing practical applications while acknowledging key pitfalls. Drawing from real examples and current industry needs, Matt will help us explore how furniture marketers can leverage AI tools strategically while maintaining authentic industry expertise.

About Matt: As a career professional-turned academic, Matt has more than 15 years of combined experience in digital media, public relations, advertising, teaching and research. He joined the Nido R. Qubein School of Communication in 2013 as an adjunct instructor and is now Assistant Professor of Strategic Communication. He is passionate about ensuring students enter their careers prepared for the changing industry landscape, including the use of AI in all aspects of communications.

2:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. COOKIE BREAK – Sponsored by Steinreich Communications Group

3:00 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

SESSION 6: Hack the Algorithm with AI – A Data-First Approach to Influencer Marketing



Atul Singh, CEO & Co-Founder, The Shelf, Atlanta

It's 2025, and influencer marketing is no longer a "nice-to-have" channel. It is table stakes for any home furnishings brand seeking sustainable growth. The Shelf is a data-first influencer marketing agency, and co-founder Atul Singh will walk us through crafting influencer programs that don't just grow brand affinity but also drive revenue. The Shelf merges AI, deep analytics and killer creative to run winning influencer programs for household brands like Sam's Club, Mohawk Flooring, Farberware and more.

About Atul: As co-founder and CEO of The Shelf, Atul leads a global team of more than 90 professionals at the Atlanta-based agency, which has been named to *Inc.* magazine's 5000 Fastest Growing Private Companies list four times. Prior to launching The Shelf, Atul was a leading computer science researcher known for his expertise in algorithms and data science. Having successfully transitioned from a research-focused career to a dynamic role in the marketing industry, he continues to leverage his analytical prowess to guide The Shelf.

3:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

SESSION 7: Gear Up for 2025 Furniture Safety Week!

Pat Bowling, Vice President of Communications, American Home Furnishings Alliance, High Point, NC

Furniture Safety Week engages all segments of the home furnishings industry in a week-long effort to raise consumer awareness of common furniture hazards, especially furniture tipover. Here's how your company can play a part.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Light Breakfast – Sponsored by FurnitureDealer.Net

8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m.

Welcome Back – Pat Bowling

8:40 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

SESSION 8: The Power of a Brand



Kent Panther, President/CEO, Wray Ward, Charlotte, NC

We all know a brand can transform a commodity into a highly valued, highly sought-after product or service. This interactive presentation serves as a reminder of the power of a brand and the factors that make a brand successful.

About Kent: During his 21-year tenure at Wray Ward, Kent has overseen insights and brand strategy, client engagement, project management, resourcing and business development. He is a frequent presenter at AHFA marketing conferences and has also delivered insights to marketers and researchers at the Hardware Marketing Council, Home Improvement Research Institute Summit and CEO Summit at Las Vegas Market.

Prior to Wray Ward, Kent was the founder and president of Incite Communications, a strategic marketing communications firm. He also held management and supervisory positions at several agencies in the southeast where he worked with brands including McDonald's, Michelin, Lowe's and more.

9:15 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. SESSION 9: PANEL – Brand Storytelling



How well does your company tell its brand story? Do your product designs and the words and images you use to market those products convey that story, or has the message veered off track? Our Brand Storytelling panelists will each describe the essence of their brand story and how they protect it from inevitable challenges and distractions.

Elise Gabrielson is Vice President of Marketing for Crypton, based in Bloomfield Hills, MI. When Crypton expanded from performance textiles for the contract sector into performance textiles for residential, they brought on Elise to launch the consumer-facing brand.

*Angela Kim is the Senior Director of Global Licensing for Hearst Magazines, New York. Building innovative partnerships – and skillfully blending brand stories – is at the core of what she does. Most recently, she brought *Country Living's* timeless and heartfelt story into a partnership with Legacy Classic|Modern Furniture.*

Doug Bassett is the President of Vaughan-Bassett in Galax, VA. The legacy, made-in-America brand has remained front and center even as the company enters year eight of its successful partnership with the HGTV powerhouse duo Erin and Ben Napier of "Hometown" fame.

10:15 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. BREAK

10:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. SESSION 10: The Swiss-Army-Knife Marketer: From Overstretched to Indispensable



Katie Brown, Director of Business Strategy, & Christina Rogers, Senior Director of Communications, luquire, Charlotte, NC

Marketing executives today aren't just leading marketing – they are expected to be brand architects, data scientists, budget whisperers, AI strategists, cultural translators and crisis managers all at once. The job keeps expanding, but the influence of marketing at the executive table? That's another story. Too many marketing leaders are stuck reacting to relentless pressure instead of rewriting the rules. It's time to turn versatility into leverage – not just a survival tactic, but a strategic advantage. Katie and

Christina will lead a provocative discussion on how today's best marketing executives are reshaping their roles and proving marketing isn't just part of the business. It *is* the business.

About Katie & Christina: Katie has held marketing strategy and leadership roles across her 16-year career in corporate, agency and nonprofit settings. She has served as the chief of staff for the vice chairman of UBS Wealth Management, the director of marketing for various non-profit organizations, and a senior market research consultant for Bloomingdales, Marriott, Hertz, and Outback Steakhouse. Her passion lies in exploring human truths and how they turn into untapped potential for brands and bottom lines. Christina drives integrated communications strategy at luquire, blending owned, earned and paid influencer approaches to elevate brands and deepen consumer relationships. She is known for her ability to fuse strategy with storytelling, and she cultivates innovative approaches that push brands forward.

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. SESSION 11: The Evolution of Product Visualization



Michal Stachowski, COO & Co-Founder, Intiario, Greensboro, NC

From photography to 3D models to AI—navigating the evolving landscape of product visualization is no small task, and there's more on the horizon. Understanding the full spectrum of visualization tools and how they connect is key to staying ahead, and to ensuring that your current investments and team are positioned to evolve with the changing technology landscape.

About Michal: Michal co-founded Intiario with Pawel Ciach in 2017 after they experienced frustration during their own furniture purchasing journey. A native of Warsaw, Poland, Michal began his career in web and graphics design before spending seven years as a managing partner for Agitive, a computer systems design company.

12:00 – 1:00 p.m. GRAB-AND-GO LUNCH

Brainstorming for next year's conference!

Box lunches and networking for those who can stay, or grab-and-go for those with early afternoon departures.



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