

Robb & Stucky Expands Internationally to Hospitality & Resort Industries by Marge Lennon



No matter where they are located around the world, all hotels, timeshare and fractional resorts have one important thing in common: their interiors must contain quality furnishings that convey a genuine "Welcome!" feeling ... the minute the guest opens the door. These same interiors must also provide comfort for the guest along with durability and minimum maintenance to the property owner.

In today's economic environment of decreasing guests and reduced budgets, how can this be accomplished?

It has been proven that interior furnishings that are well engineered and designed will long outlast those that are not. Products considered "affordable" tend to lose their looks faster and become easily disposable, requiring refurbishments sooner than scheduled. Adding fuel to the "buy quality" mantra: research has indicated that people have an innate ability to sense the use of quality furnishings. It makes them feel better about their surroundings and enhances their vacation experience.

Until recently, the process that involves the selection, manufacturing, purchasing and installation of furnishings for these properties has been accomplished through the use of many specialists. Today, one company, Robb & Stucky Interiors, is helping its hotel, timeshare and fractional clients make wise interior and refurbishing decisions with their ability to provide all of these services with just one phone call.

Since their beginnings in 1915 in Fort Myers, Florida, Robb & Stucky has evolved to become one of the largest high-end furniture retailers in North America. Although the world around them has dramatically changed since they were founded 93 years ago, quality, service and total customer satisfaction have remained the hallmarks of the company's distinctive style. By 2009, the company had expanded both domestically and internationally with its 15 interior showrooms and eight patio stores located in Florida, Arizona, Nevada, Texas and Costa Rica.

During the past three decades, Robb & Stucky has enjoyed success in the Florida residential market. With their corporate headquarters in the heart of Florida's tourism mecca, their expansion into the hospitality and timeshare industry was a natural evolution. "We had always furnished Florida hotels and timeshare resorts, including South Seas Plantation and the Southwest Florida properties that are now a part of Hilton Grand Vacations Company," said Dan Lubner, President Robb & Stucky Resorts Division, "so we were comfortable with providing design services to this market."

About five years ago, Robb & Stucky decided to increase their service capabilities by manufacturing what they design, creating customized product lines for each commercial and hospitality application and sharing their highly specialized knowledge with worldwide management companies and developers of condominiums, hotels, timeshare and fractional properties. Their reception from hospitality giants to timeshare developers has been highly positive.

As a testament to their service to hoteliers, Robb & Stucky was recently named the newest Alliance Partner for the internationally respected Preferred Hotel Group. Under the arrangement, Robb & Stucky will be available to provide interior design services for Preferred Hotel Group's more than 700 member hotels, resorts and fractional ownership properties located in over 70 countries. Preferred Hotel Group is a 40-year-old multi-brand global organization



that delivers sales, marketing, and service solutions to independent luxury hotels and resorts around the world through its five brands.

“We are pleased to have a quality company like Robb & Stucky Interiors join our prestigious group of Alliance Partners,” added Thom Nulty, Senior Vice President of Business Relations for the Preferred Hotel Group, “and look forward to recommending them to our members. We are impressed with their scope of interior design and vertical integration capabilities and dedication to exceptional service.”

Said Lubner, “We are honored to be affiliated with Preferred Hotel Group. The properties they represent are some of the finest in the world and their reputation is impeccable within the hotel industry. Our extensive resort/hotel experience, combined with our unique design capabilities and worldwide logistical reach, make for a perfect partnership. Although we may be headquartered in Florida, getting furniture to every corner of the globe is not a problem. We’ve shipped to every Continent except Antarctica.”

Deliveries To Every Corner of the Globe

According to Ken Fitzgerald, Vice President of Logistics and Operations for Robb & Stucky, “We distribute our products from over 700,000 square feet of combined space in our Distribution Center in North Carolina and our three Customer Service Centers in Florida, Arizona and Texas.



Customers in North America receive shipments from our Customer Service Centers, where items are opened/ unboxed, inspected, prepped/ deluxed, blanket-wrapped, loaded into delivery trucks and delivered to customers with 'white-glove' service."

Overseas shipments are assembled at the distribution center and loaded into containers in their original carton or protective packaging. "Because of the long transit times typically involved and the potential hazards of water movement," adds Fitzgerald, it is best to leave products in their original packaging, allowing them to be loaded into the container 'tighter', helping prevent movement and minimizing the potential for damage." At the receiving end, Robb & Stucky sends several quality control experts to the site to monitor and oversee the final preparations and

delivery process to ensure it meets their standards.

"With our international shipments, we first conduct exhaustive due diligence with our partner companies, working only with experienced international freight forwarders who provide the best in both value and service. They accept the booking of the cargo, move the container to port, assign the vessel, guarantee the departure and arrival dates, and handle customs clearance and arrival to the client's door. None of this is left to the customer to handle. We do it all. The systems and tracking capabilities used by these ocean freight forwarders is much like Fed Ex in that we know where a shipment is every step of the way. Frequently, we work with a client's shipping agent or forwarder and can coordinate hand-off of containers to their preferred freight forwarder anywhere within the supply chain pipeline."

Robb & Stucky Design Services

Robb & Stucky does much more than select furniture and ship it to the client in a timely manner. They also have the capabilities of manufacturing furnishings specifically for each property, often at a surprisingly affordable cost. In addition to interior design and product development, they direct the purchasing, delivery, installation and servicing, frequently working with homeowners' associations and boards of directors at timeshare properties. The size and buying power of such a large retailer and their bundling of services enables Robb & Stucky to provide furnishings and design work at highly competitive prices, whether the client is in Denver or Dubai.

As a full-service interior design house, Robb & Stucky is equipped provide many additional services, such as creating custom-designed furnishings to fit tight spaces at affordable prices. They also select appropriate flooring and window treatments and handle the maintenance of furniture after it has been installed.

While resort and hotel refurbishments have been a Robb & Stucky specialty for many years, Dan Lubner has met recently with dozens of developers who have unsold condominiums and are considering converting

them to rental or lease units. The "just right" furnishings package can have a positive impact on generating positive cash flow for the owners of these properties. For Lubner's team, this is

purchased, which is often not in the client's best interest. "Instead," she says, "we take the existing project and offer the best possible solution, creating the perfect piece for that

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a relatively easy assignment ... one that they have completed many times and with highly positive results.

In comparing the services of Robb & Stucky to those of a designer or purchasing agent, Mary Turschmann, Director of Business Development explains, "In the typical developer-designer relationship, a major portion of the budget goes toward design, installation, warehousing of furniture and coordination fees. When we are given a 'key rate' or total budget, we put all of our efforts into the creation of the product – not for commissionable services, providing these ancillary services without charge. The customer pays only for the actual products they purchase."

Purchasing agents are generally remunerated based on the total dollar volume of items

location. We like to feel that we are an integral part of every project we take on and don't have to rely on what someone has put into their catalog."

By providing true "turn-key" solutions to design issues, Robb & Stucky is equipped to handle all facets of the required work without the need for outsourcing or paying the middleman's markup or designers' commissions. This allows for the maximum percentage of the developers' furniture, fixture and equipment budget to actually be spent on FF&E.

With their immense warehousing capabilities, Robb & Stucky also provides storage for extra pieces of furniture, carrying "attic stock" and delivering it within days to U.S. locations, and internationally a few days longer, eliminating the concern for discontinued pieces of furniture. If



someone breaks a chair in a unit, it won't take six months to receive a new one.

After receiving many requests for quality bedding, the company also manufactures its own line of high-end bedding and related accessories and also supplies appliances and televisions at competitive prices. After units have been installed, the company offers what it calls "triage services" by providing five service calls during the first year to customers to repair any minor scratches on legs and tops or spruce up the furniture.

Adds Turschmann, "With one of North America's largest teams of licensed interior designers, many with extensive hospitality experience, these professionals understand that there can be dramatic differences in furnishings and styles from one geographic area to another. This ability to regionalize designs along with our buying power and

highly competitive prices."

Robb & Stucky designers no longer use old-fashioned "color boards" with tiny chips of paint and small pieces of material to show a client their proposed interiors. Instead, they utilize computer-generated images that embrace today's 3-D CAD technology, showing owners exactly what the final product will look like, where it will be placed, and how each element blends together.

With approximately 1,170 employees in the design field, these professionals can be mobilized from any part of the globe. They have recently served clients from Miami to Mazatlan and the Middle East.

Some hints from Robb & Stucky designers: A well-defined space is intended to invoke an emotional response from the user. Instead of a guest saying "what a great looking

from conception, amazing results will be achieved. By working together on finishes and background colors, the result is an environment that enhances the furnishings and provides a fluid transition from one interior space to another. What you don't actually see but feel is often the most important aspect of your stay.

For *Perspective* readers considering the refurbishment of a resort property or seeking advice on furnishing a new one, Robb & Stucky Interiors is well qualified to help guide you through the challenges of all of your interior design needs. Concludes Lubner, "We understand the importance of interior design and quality furnishings in today's shared-use property and strive to become a significant partner with our developer clients, working diligently to play a key role in their sales success."

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A well-defined space is intended to invoke an emotional response from the user. Instead of a guest saying "What a great looking sofa," they should be saying, "I loved staying there."

comfort level in the hospitality industry has enabled us to provide interiors that please both the developer and the owners ... and at

sofa," they should be saying "I loved staying there." When the designer partners with the developer, architect, and contractor team