

LEONARD J. BACKER

**16463 NE 33rd Avenue
North Miami Beach, FL 33160
(305) 409-9092**

Education:

B.A. Degree, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ, 1973

Patents held:

U.S. Chair Design Patent # Des. 335,587 (May 18, 1993)

Relevant Work History:

**Loewenstein Furniture Group, Inc.
Vice President Marketing and Product Development
1987 to 2000**

Served as an Officer of this furniture manufacturing company. Broad hands-on experience in all key areas of the business. Organized and directed a very successful high-volume private label seating manufacturing program, supplying some of the industry's largest and best-known companies, including Knoll and Herman Miller.

Worked closely with our factory operations to help train workers in assembly, glue-up, wood finishing, upholstery and quality inspection processes; especially when new models were first introduced into production. Learned first-hand about proper construction techniques for producing extremely durable wood, metal and upholstered seating, furniture, and tables for the heaviest use environments. Managed high volume customer service department, gaining extensive direct experience with identifying all types of end user product and performance issues with furniture, seating, and tables under commercial and hospitality use conditions. Negotiated as key supplier on hotel standards programs.

Continually assumed increasing levels of responsibility to support very rapid and profitable company growth. Established a strong industry-wide brand image for well designed, well priced, and well-engineered multi-purpose seating and tables. Expanded the company's targeted markets to include hotels, restaurants, resorts, casinos, cruise lines, universities, stadiums and arenas, retail store chains, healthcare, and senior living.

Travelled extensively to trade shows; visited interior designers and office furniture dealers throughout the U.S. Worked with the company's sales force to make customer visits, technical product presentations and help close large project orders. Negotiated with freight carriers and delivery services. Was directly involved with packaging and carton specifications, distribution, and freight damage issues.

EPIC Furniture Group, Inc.
Co-Founder, Senior Vice President
2000 to 2005

Co-founded this furniture company, whose products included commercial grade upholstered (contract) seating. The company introduced high end furniture designs from select European furnishings manufacturers into U.S. Served as an Officer and Director of the company. Coordinated the set-up of a high-quality seating manufacturing operation along with product development and prototyping/sample departments. Worked closely with various private label furniture and table factories to supply complementary products for hotel, cruise line, restaurant projects and standards programs.

Responsible for new design development, key supplier relations, and purchasing negotiations. Worked with product designers to help re-engineer, re-scale and make substantive modifications to original highly finessed designs, resulting in many successful seating (wood-metal-lounge-outdoor) and table collections for the U.S. furniture market. Was an integral part of the sales management and customer support teams.

Brown Jordan International
Contract Division
Vice President Marketing
2005 to 2008

Served as an Officer of this furniture company, whose products included commercial grade upholstered (contract) seating. Directed all product development efforts and sales support. Visited over 80 domestic and overseas furniture factories to monitor product development, quality control, pricing, and delivery, to upgrade existing quality levels, and to search for and negotiate with new potential suppliers for indoor and outdoor seating and tables. Directly sourced additional furniture products for special hotel projects.

Directed all new product design and development strategies, coordinated inter-departmental support to bring new seating and furniture collections online to meet corporate parameters for budgeting and product launch target dates. Overhauled the existing new product development process to become more focused and responsive to engineering, tooling, sales, factory efficiency, costing, quality levels and supplier requirements.

Recruited as a key member of the leadership team upon joining the organization to tackle a serious turnaround situation. Worked as part of the senior executive group to identify and aggressively fix major problems in various marketing, branding, operational, sales support, and customer service areas.

Leonard J. Backer Associates LLC
President
2008 to Present

Frequently retained by law firms, insurance companies and other entities as a recognized furniture and seating expert witness, certified in many state courts and in federal court, regarding indoor and outdoor seating, tables, benches, booths, and other furniture-related issues in litigation, supporting both plaintiff and defense sides.

Worked with branded furniture manufacturers to develop private label seating, table, and furnishings products. Have engaged in strategic consulting projects encompassing furniture marketing, product and component sourcing, catalog expansion and distribution initiatives.

AREAS OF FURNITURE EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE:

- 1) Product Design and Development** – Worked closely with many independent furniture, seating and table designers in both the U.S. and in Europe. Collaborations included working with world renowned seating designers such as Enrico Franzolini, Carlo Bartoli, Wolf Schmidt-Bandelow, Paolo Favaretto, Werther Toffoloni, Giorgio Soressi, Mauro Lipparini, Wolfgang Mezger and Carlo Bimbi, along with table designers including Michael Wolk and David Pessa. Directed these product development projects from the initial concept and rendering stages, through drawing revisions, prototyping, sample shop visits, frame construction issues, final master sample evaluations and approvals, pre-production set up, master product quality control inspection samples and factory training.
- 2) Product Evaluations and Final Approval** - Personally evaluated and “sit tested” approximately 2,000 different chair designs; reviewing these models prior to their potential market introduction for: construction integrity, aesthetics, scale, comfort level, long term durability, ease of maintenance, application for commercial and hospitality heavy use environments, proper overall and inside dimensions and ease of ingress and egress.
- 3) Frame and Component Sourcing** – Completed 100+ detailed domestic and overseas factory visits and supplier pre-qualification analyses to decide if new suppliers could meet targeted levels for product quality and consistency, lead times, volume increases and service and support after the sale. Initiated agreements where needed, to further confirm detailed technical specifications and product testing results. In addition to seating and table parts, handled other components such as seat deck webbing, fabric, leather and foam.
- 4) Purchasing and Supplier Relations** – Continually visited both domestic and overseas factory suppliers for pricing negotiations, value engineering ideas, product quality issues, logistical and process improvements and new product programs and

initiatives. Accompanied seven different company purchasing managers on overseas factory visits to introduce them to the factory owners, set up clear communications, initiate supply agreements and set up strong protocols to maintain as smooth a relationship as possible with both large and small suppliers.

- 5) **New Product Launch and Manufacturing Set-up** – Intimately involved in all final decision making prior to adding any new items (seating or tables) into the catalog. Completed gross margin analyses and presented to senior management. Approved all final internal costing sheets (analyzing labor – materials – overhead allocations). Worked closely with purchasing, manufacturing and engineering areas to finalize detailed bills of materials for each new product.
- 6) **Manufacturing and Factory Floor Operations** – Many years of hands-on experience in all phases of wood furniture production (approximately \$600 million) including assembly, glue up, sanding, finishing, cut and sew, upholstery, quality inspection, pack and wrap, shipping. Familiar with various wood species including European beech, maple, oak, ash, veneer, beech and maple plywood. Also experienced in metal furniture production (approximately \$300 million), including raw steel frame preparation, round steel tube bending, aluminum square tube, welding, chrome plating and powder coating. Familiar with plastic furniture; prototyping and mold-based manufacturing.
- 7) **Negotiation and Management of Private Label Agreements** – Set up my firms as reliable, high volume private label suppliers to various well-known branded furniture companies including Knoll, Herman Miller, Halcon, Wieland and SMED (division of Haworth). Our products were shipped out under their names, fully manufactured in cartons to their final warehouse destinations or dealers throughout the U.S. Also negotiated private label agreements where certain domestic table and lounge seating suppliers would manufacture and ship complete chairs and tables to our catalog specifications, matching our wood or metal finishes, under our brand name.
- 8) **Marketing** – Built and maintained an industry wide reputation over many years as an aggressive marketer, particularly focused in all commercial and hospitality furniture areas. Developed and maintained my various companies' global reputations for offering clean, updated and original seating and table designs. Continually introduced leading edge, interior design-oriented sales materials. Handled website development and upgrades, all studio photography, media advertising and trade show programming.
- 9) **Relationships with Interior Design Communities** – Continually travelled and made product and specific project presentations to hundreds of the top-rated interior design firms throughout the U.S. Received first-hand feedback and opinions about our designs and how we could better support their additional product needs.

- 10) Serving Hospitality Markets** – Directly involved with over 1,000 successful hospitality projects throughout my career; from the initial specification and bid submittal processes through prototype sample production and evaluation, mock-up room reviews, final pricing negotiations, sales rep coordination, manufacturing, quality inspection and final delivery to the end user location. All the products that I manufactured and marketed were properly engineered for heavy use hospitality or commercial markets, whether for indoor or outdoor use. These markets included hotels, restaurants, fast food, cruise lines, timeshare resorts, spas, casinos and stadiums (including NFL, NBA, MLB and NCAA facilities). Approved supplier to companies such as Marriott, Hilton, Ritz Carlton, Starwood, Sheraton, Hyatt, Embassy Suites, Disney, Wyndham, Crowne Plaza, Doubletree, Carnival Cruise, Royal Caribbean, Princess Cruises, Chili's, and Denny's.
- 11) University and Institutional Markets** – Directly involved in a multitude of projects, interior design specifications, purchasing agreements and end user facility visits in this heavy use commercial seating market. Installations included student dining halls, faculty dining rooms, conference and training facilities, libraries, student housing, dormitory lounges, banquet/special event areas and athletic stadium food service areas and suites. Projects included wood, metal (stacking and non-stacking) and fully upholstered seating, dining and occasional tables.
- 12) Office Furniture Markets** – Worked closely with many interior design firms, purchasing agents and office furniture dealers, to successfully support corporate furniture projects and installations throughout the U.S. including banks, insurance companies, brokerage and financial firms, healthcare facilities and technology firms.
- 13) Retail Store Planning Markets** - Worked with in-house designers as key seating and table supplier on corporate standards programs and individual projects for Macy's, Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue, Dillard's, Belk, Target, JC Penney, Precision Lens Crafters, Pearle Vision and Zale Jewelers among others, in this visual merchandising area. Also worked with major independent retail store interior design firms (including Gensler), as well as retail mall developers including Simon Properties, General Growth and Taubman.
- 14) Residential Furniture Markets** – Intimately familiar with all aspects of furniture retail processes, strategies, showrooms, floor samples, warehouse receiving inspections, sales and ordering procedures, manufacturer relations, pricing/discounts, delivery and customer installation.
- 15) Site Visits and Customer Service Issues** – Managed various customer service departments, personally completed 300+ site visits and evaluated hundreds of additional images sent in by our sales reps, to determine causation of all types of seating, furniture or table related incidents and/or possible product defect or warranty issues.

- 16) Product Testing Laboratories** – Maintained relationships with various domestic and overseas furniture testing facilities. Initiated certain testing projects and monitored test protocols and results, including all stacking chairs, individual lounge collections for GSA “heavy duty” testing and burn testing to California Technical Bulletin #133 Flammability Standard. Familiar with standard ANSI/BIFMA commercial use seating and furniture tests, as well as the European CATAS testing standards.
- 17) Internal Training** – Directly handled and coordinated all training for new products introduced into the manufacturing operations. Worked closely with company engineering and new product sampling departments, to confirm and write up all detailed technical specifications for all new catalog product additions. Directed all product and support training for the customer service and large project quotation departments. Set up, trained, and managed the internal private label manufacturing area, which supported programs supplying up to 35,000 chairs and tables per year we produced for other branded office, hospitality, and healthcare furniture companies.
- 18) Custom Design and Large Project Follow Through** – Directly responsible for monitoring and coordination of overseas supplier pricing negotiations and logistics preparation for all large projects (usually 300+ pieces) and custom design opportunities. These type projects would include furnishings for restaurant chain standards programs, hotels, timeshare resorts, cruise ships, stadiums and arenas, large healthcare facilities, corporate expansions, government facilities, and universities.
- 19) Catalogs, Price Lists and Specification Materials** – Totally responsible for producing, laying out and final proofing of all company sales and marketing materials. Worked very closely with outside photographers, graphic artists and printers to produce high quality designer-oriented literature, catalog binders, price books, tear sheets, swatch cards, product specification sheets and brochures. Directed all aspects of various company websites, with continual updates as needed.
- 20) Furniture Industry Competition** – Kept a close eye on all industry competitors throughout my career, especially in the seating and table categories. Performed a detailed competitive analysis as part of all new product design/development projects.
- 21) Product Warranty Issues** – Worked closely with outside counsel to develop very detailed and comprehensive warranty, care, and maintenance instructions for all types of seating, table, and furniture products. Addressed issues such as furniture abuse, field maintenance and cleaning issues, possible manufacturing defects, field inspections and returns or replacements.
- 22) Freight and Packaging** – Extensive involvement in all aspects of inbound component shipments from overseas and outbound shipment of finished products from our factories. Experienced with freight carrier negotiations and claims issues. Familiar with carton standards and various inner pack options.

Possesses background, training and experience in following areas:

- New product design and development strategies, by working closely with many domestic and overseas independent product designers. Became directly involved in the evolution of design ideas through actual prototyping and sample shop operations.
- Pre-qualifying, establishing relations and negotiating agreements with component suppliers located both domestically and overseas.
- Frame construction and engineering for heavy commercial and hospitality use environments. Chair and table testing protocols.
- Quality control and inspection procedures, through continuous factory site visits and direct supplier contacts.
- Recommended inspection, care, and maintenance procedures for commercial use seating after installation.
- All production processes for wood, metal, plastic molded, stacking, upholstered seating (approximately \$70 million in lounge seating) and occasional and dining tables (approximately \$20 million) for indoor and outdoor applications.
- Furniture component inventories and inbound/outbound shipping.
- Proper packaging techniques and materials.
- Wood production processes including assembly, glue-up and finishing.
- Various wood species and their characteristics and aesthetics including solid European beech, hard and soft maple, ash, veneers, plywood and rubberwood.
- Metal production processes including tube bending, welding, raw frame preparation, powder coating, anodization and chrome plating.
- Metal furniture frame components and proper production methods including steel tube, solid steel bar stock, aluminum tube, cast aluminum and PVC.
- Upholstery and lounge seating production processes including plywood and MDF inner frame construction, foam up, cut, sew, stitching and final upholstery methods and inspection.
- Fabric, leather and vinyl supply programs including mill direct and cut yardage distribution relationships, profit analysis and price list grade-in.

- Table-top and base production processes including solid wood, butcher block, veneer, plastic laminate, resin, cast aluminum, aluminum tube and steel tube.
- Detailed product costing along with bill of materials formulation and gross profit margin analysis.
- Product launch and marketing support processes, including catalog introduction, layout and printing of all sales literature, technical specification sheets, price list formulation, press releases, trade show programming and website updates.
- Private label manufacturing, including all negotiations, logistics and support for many seating, table and furniture products and projects.
- Large project quotes (both catalog models and custom designs) and follow through to close sales against strong industry competition.
- Customer service and support after sales includes managing a high-volume customer service department, site visits and detailed product inspections, warranty issues, product repairs or replacements, customer abuse situations and freight damage.

MATERIALS WRITTEN/PRODUCED BY LEONARD J. BACKER (1987 – 2008):

- Manufacturer information regarding product warranties, care and maintenance, inspection procedures, field issues, customer service and support.
- Product/Specification Brochures for 500+ Seating and Table Collections distributed throughout the U.S.
- Comprehensive Price Books covering extensive product lines. Full responsibility for all technical specifications, product images, narrative, margin analysis and pricing.
- Detailed press releases focusing on design and functionality of new product introductions.
- Promotional literature for trade shows, email blasts, designer postcards, dealer showroom sales support.

FURNITURE INDUSTRY PRESENTATIONS - TRAINING SEMINARS:

- "Furniture Manufacturing and its Impact on the Environment"
Institute of Business Designers, New York City, NY - Featured Speaker
- Panelist and Speaker at Various National and Regional Furniture Shows and Exhibitions Covering Range of Industry Topics and Often Quoted for Publication Follow Ups
- Proper Inspection, Care and Maintenance Programs for Commercial Use Seating
- "How to Make Better Furniture Presentations to Interior Designers"
Training Course Given to Independent Furniture Sales Rep Groups
- "Better Organizing Large Project and Custom Quotes"
Training Given to Internal Furniture Sales and Customer Service Departments

PAST AFFILIATIONS:

Business and Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association (BIFMA)

Institute of Business Designers (IBD)

National Restaurant Association (NRA)

Maintained working relationships with both domestic and overseas BIFMA certified seating and furniture testing laboratories including CATAS (European Testing Certification)