

For Burrow, Showrooms Help Simplify the Furniture-Buying Experience

Article



S hopping for furniture can be overwhelming, whether online or in-store. It's something the co-founders of Burrow found out firsthand years ago when they were looking to

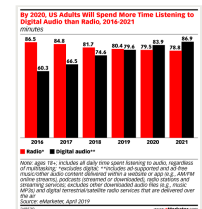
invest in their own big-ticket items.

“The furniture-buying experience today is terrible,” said Alex Kubo, vice president of ecommerce at furniture brand Burrow. “Burrow actually started because of some horrible experiences that our two co-founders had, which are unfortunately really common experiences. Kabeer [Chopra] ... went to West Elm and found what seemed like a great couch. And then he was told it wouldn't get to him for 12 weeks. This was as we were starting business school by the way. So, he would be waiting for his couch for a full semester. He ended up ... buying the floor model, taking the cart from his lobby, walking to West Elm, putting it on the cart and bringing it back to his apartment.

“And then Stephen [Kuhl] went the classic Ikea route. You ... get something flat pack, which is great. It gets to you relatively quickly, but then you set it up, and you have blisters on your fingers from trying to use a hex key to install a giant piece of furniture. And eventually when you move, that particular [furniture] is not going to hold up. So, it's lost money. It's not an investment piece.”

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Burrow launched in 2017 to help streamline the furniture-buying process. The company offered free swatches, implemented a returns policy and offered trials to get consumers more comfortable with making a big purchase. And a year after establishing an online presence, Burrow launched its first showroom in New York City, followed by another location in Chicago.

Selling in stores is different than selling online, though. “You have to deal with things like rain, which is a much different challenge than going on your phone and buying a couch,” Kubo said. “Having the physical retail location from a functional standpoint helps meet one of the biggest gaps that we have, which is that furniture is an antiquated market, and people are used to ... touching and feeling furniture in-person at these big, overwhelming warehouses where you're faced with paralysis of choice. And they're having that kind of predisposition that I need to touch something before I buy it, [especially something] that's over \$1,000.”

The company has also learned a lot from its showrooms.

“A lot of our ecommerce transaction activity has spiked in the local markets ... which tells me that people feel more comfortable purchasing large-ticket items online if they know they have a store within a couple of miles they can ... complain at if anything were to go wrong, and there's so many brands and products that are [popping up],” Kubo added.