

Hardwood Promotion Collaboration Discussion
August 16-17, 2019
Atlanta, GA

Executive Summary

Issue

The U.S. hardwood industry is facing significant change driven by a variety of factors, including stiff competition from vinyl, plastic, ceramic and concrete products, a slowing world economy, continued misleading campaigns about the sustainability of wood products aimed at both the public and policy makers, and the ongoing U.S. trade war with China. Markets are shrinking and businesses are looking towards an uncertain future.

The U.S. hardwood industry has a wonderful story to tell...the beauty and desirability of the products, the history of the industry, the small family business focus, the sustainability of our raw material, and the environmental and health benefits of using hardwood. However, the industry has not yet been successful in developing a coordinated and collaborative initiative to promote the true story and science-based benefits of real American hardwood. This has allowed our competitors and adversaries to frame public opinion and gain the advantage.

Call to Action

In order to start the process of developing a collaborative effort to promote the use of real American hardwood to consumers, a small group of hardwood association executives came together to brainstorm ideas and approaches. From this conversation came a larger meeting in Atlanta on July 16-17, 2019 with 19 hardwood association executives and association board members to further consider actions that the entire industry could participate in and benefit from.

The group agreed a priority is to move forward in a way that is open and engages **all** members of the hardwood community...receiving input and recognizing the differences of various industry segments. The many unique aspects of the hardwood industry were identified and it was acknowledged that different industry segments may have different, yet complimentary, promotional needs.

Proposed Action

During the conversations in Atlanta it became clear that the first thing we as an industry must do is to assess our current marketing resources, including existing promotion, research projects, advocacy efforts, and data related to consumer trends and competing product availability. Once we know what we have, we can identify what we need. This information will help us develop the strong brand statement we will need to effectively promote hardwood products. The effort to collect this information has already begun.

The second priority, closely related to the first, is to identify university architecture and design school courses and competitions related to the use of hardwood. Once identified, we can share existing educational materials and recommend industry experts willing to participate in classroom presentations.

Third, and probably most importantly, we must also identify and welcome all those who have an interest in working with us...and creating a process that encourages and allows engagement in different yet complimentary ways. A team has been identified to draft communication materials that can be widely shared at industry meetings over the next several months. Future meetings (to be scheduled soon) will be open to interested associations and companies alike. And communications about strategy development and implementation will be available to all.

The task before us all, as members of the U.S. hardwood industry, is not an easy one. However, there is great optimism that if we can work together, we can overcome the obstacles we face.

For more questions and information, please send a note to hardwoodpromotion@gmail.com.