

## Most bedding execs agree with better forecast

BY DAVID PERRY

**AT THE MARKET** — Hopes are rising for a solid year of growth in the mattress industry, according to bedding exhibitors showing here.

On the eve of the market, the International Sleep Products Assn. issued a new forecast for business this year that envisions significantly stronger growth than had been forecast last fall. ISPA cited a strengthening economy, a robust housing recovery and accelerating consumption growth as factors for its new growth forecast for business this year and into

next year.

Bedding executives showing here said they see nice increases in their business so far this year, fueled by expanding distribution and good retail acceptance of their new product lines, which include hybrids, sleep accessories and flagship bedding lines.

Furniture/Today posed this question to the bedding execs: ISPA recently boosted its forecast for business this year to a 4% increase in units and a 6.5% increase in the dollar value of bedding shipments. What have you seen so far this year that makes you more optimistic

about business prospects this year?

Here are their answers:

**Mark Akerman, president, Enso Sleep Systems:** “The short answer to what we have seen at Enso that makes us optimistic about business prospects this year? Orders.

“We have seen not only existing account business increase with us, but significant new floor placements of not only our Enso Hybrid program, but equally as important the Enso En-Motion Power Base program. We are outpacing the industry by double digits in the first quarter, and are very optimistic that the

growth Enso dealers are generating will continue throughout the year.”

**Sean Bergman, chief market-**

**ing officer, PureCare:** “PureCare’s revenue has seen over a 30% increase in the first quarter, not including figures from our new Elements sheet program. This

increase has been driven equally by same store sales increases and new retailers joining our family. I see more and more of our current retailers looking to enhance and expand their product category offerings — and retail prospects exercising critical review and making changes to the programs they currently have — to capture the opportunities that the stronger business climate is providing. We are very bullish on 2015.”

**Gerry Borreggine, president, Therapedic:** “Parts of the country, and the Northeast in particular, had a terrible winter, which adversely affected business. Consequently, there is a pent-up demand in that region of the country that should be realized in the second and third quarters of this year.

“As for the revised ISPA forecast, I don’t think that is any new indicator of what is going to happen over the balance of this year. Growth this year of 4% to 5% in units and 6% to 7% in dollars is what many have been projecting.”

**Bill Hammer, president, Shifman Mattress:** “After a sluggish start to the year, the first quarter ended stronger than expected with an 11% increase in delivered sales volume. With the winter weather behind us, improved

business conditions, aggressive promotions placed with our larger accounts, and new sales leadership, our results will significantly exceed the ISPA forecast.”

**Robert Naboichek, president, Gold Bond Mattress:** “I think ISPA was rightfully conservative with their earlier projections for 2015. There were many unknowns that are now more clearly apparent. Interest rates are still at record lows and with inflation a nonissue there is no urgency to raise rates.

“Energy costs as well as gasoline are also significantly below the levels of one and two years ago. Employment continues to improve as well as home sales. Consumer spending and consumer confidence are very visible in record auto sales. All of this bodes well for a stronger 2015 for all home furnishings, especially mattresses.”

**Ron Passaglia, president, Restonic:** “At Restonic we have been fortunate enough to continue our trend of 2014 with robust growth. All of our new 2015 bedding collections, ComfortCare, ComfortCare Select and Comfort Care Limited, were a hit at the Las Vegas Market and are experiencing strong retail placements generating increased sales in the first quarter. The bedding

consumer is back in the market and we feel that the Restonic mattress values will continue to be one of their favorite choices.

“We agree with ISPA’s new boosted forecast for 2015. We are experiencing similar growth and expect these increases throughout the rest of this year.”

**Martin Rawls-Meehan, president, Reverie:** “It’s been a strong first quarter and that’s being driven by the customized and customizable segment — particularly adjustable sales. Retail sales associates are getting more and more comfortable showing adjustable foundations, and consumers are starting to gain familiarity with the category of adjustable foundations.

“Do those revised ISPA numbers give me more encouragement? Growth is always encouraging, but we don’t want to assume it’s here to stay. The moment we stop building in momentum in the segment, things could change direction. We are making progress because we are doing good things as an industry. But we can’t keep the status quo. We need to keep pushing with the right design set, marketing message, and service set. Maintaining quality and service as more players enter the space will be critical.”