

Furniture Today

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Master Motion production rolls during CNY

Local hiring, SKU discipline help keep production going when many plants are on hiatus

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SHANGHAI – With booming demand stateside, motion furniture resource Master Motion has figured out how to keep production running at its dedicated manufacturing operation here during Chinese New Year.

While the plant “officially” closes until Feb. 21, a labor recruitment strategy that began four years ago allows production to run in shifts.

“We have strategically have built our workforce from all Shanghai local residents and trained locals to do the same job as if we had to hire outside of the area for similar talent,” said President and CEO Michael Nanni. “This helps us to have all of our workers local instead of hiring from neighboring cities, losing workers for the entire Chinese New Year as they return home. Our factory is located in the hometown of all our employees.”

During Chinese New Year, the factory runs on shifts. Specific employees will take their vacation at the beginning of the holiday, others in the middle and the rest at the end of CNY.

“This allows us to run ‘vacation-shifts’ so we always have enough workers at the factory to produce and run the factory as normal through the entire Chinese New Year shutdown,” Nanni said. “Since we keep our frame styles to a minimum and change the elements and details of each frame, (we can) stock heavily on our covers and have enough of the larger items like frames, mechanisms and motors pre-stocked to last us through Chinese New Year when the suppliers re-open.”

The campus has three factories, one new this year, totaling 300,000 square feet of dedicated production space.

The company has the ability to go five levels up on each building and room to build two more five-floor factories on the same land. Master Motion owns the land and factories, which help control operating costs.

“This allows us to build and grow instantly without going through the majority of the paperwork and permits needed today to build on new land in mainland China,” Nanni said. “This streamlined operating structure is the beginning of the way we stabilize our pricing with these rising production and freight costs.”

The company has 125 core employees that work full time and 75 that work part-time or on-call for the year as needed with production specifically focused on modular massage motion furniture.

“You cannot achieve this if you hire workers who move from their home towns to solely work at the factory,” Nanni said. “This streamlined approach allows us to not have excess workers we are paying when we don’t need them and to keep those core 125 workers working all the time.”

That approach, as well as a disciplined SKU count, has helped Master Motion avoid general price increases since 2017, according to Nanni.

“It helps that we have limited frame styles that we change the elements on to get different looks,” he noted. “This allows us to stock less during CNY and stock extremely deep. If you take the same sofa frame and do it in black leather and sangria stitching and do the same frame in cream leather with Tiffany blue stitching, the same frame appeals to a totally different population.

“Produce more of the same frame styles, and you have fewer machine changes and procedural changes all the way down the production line,” Nanni continued. “Our goal is to have 10 frame-styles that make up 100 different looks, like in handbags, backpacks and sneakers. ... Nothing helps eliminate defects, damages, and the learning curve more than repetition, repetition, repetition.”



[Powell Slaughter](#)//Senior Editor

I'm Powell Slaughter, senior editor at Furniture/Today. I returned to the publication in January 2015 after nine years of writing about furniture retail strategies and best practices at a monthly magazine focusing on home furnishings retail operations. Prior to that, I spent 10 years with F/T covering wood furniture, the last five of those as case goods editor. Upon my return to F/T, I developed coverage of the logistical and service aspects of the furniture industry as well as following the occasional, home office and home entertainment categories. In April 2018 I took over the upholstery category, with responsibility for coverage of the fabric and leather stationary and motion upholstery, recliners and massage chair categories.