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# Englander Reemerges As A Modern Brand With A Simple Message

By Gretchen Kast

Quality. Simplicity. Transparency. These are the guiding principles of the Englander brand of today. Under the leadership of new president and CEO Mark Kinsley, the company is doing its part to uncomplicate the mattress shopping process—and, in doing so, is reimagining its brand for the modern retail market. By zeroing in on the value propositions most compelling to today's overwhelmed shoppers, Englander is offering a clear and straightforward message to consumers and the bedding industry at large: *"sleep is not rocket science."* The company has leveraged its operational expertise to create a new nationwide mattress lineup that underscores the idea that true comfort is delivered through proven materials and time-tested components. In streamlining its program and clarifying its core values, Englander is reinvigorating the way it communicates with consumers about mattresses—and the way consumers think about them.

An industry staple since 1894, Englander has weathered its fair share of ups and downs while never wavered from its commitment to comfort and durability. In today's competitive marketplace, however, it is no longer enough for bedding manufacturers to simply offer quality products and reliable service. The channels of communication and distribution have become increasingly crowded, and it's harder than ever for mattress makers and sellers to really engage with consumers. Recognizing this as an important crossroads for both itself and the industry, the legacy brand is making bold moves to evolve beyond its status quo.

In early 2019, the idea of redefining the Englander brand was top of mind for Kinsley as he stepped into the role of president and CEO. The company had maintained its place as a top manufacturer in the US mattress market but had been slow to adjust to

the changing digital and social landscape. As the shifting industry tides continued to gain momentum, it became clear that it was time for Englander to evolve as well.

"If brands don't change in a rapidly developing environment with many moving targets, you're going to atrophy over time," Kinsley explains. "Sometimes, when you're established and doing something that is working, it's hard to change. Operationally and internationally, there are many things that have been working for the Englander company. But we were getting chipped away at by the changing times. When that became apparent, that's when smart people put their heads together and said, 'Here's what we need to do to fix this.' Because Englander is still a relevant brand, it just needed reimagining."

The goal was never to toss aside the company's long history in favor of something trendy or flashy. Before setting any new ideas

in motion, Kinsley knew that he first had to get a clear picture of what the brand once was and how it was being perceived. He set out across the country to meet with factory owners and retail partners, in addition to going through every customer service email and voicemail the company received. The aim, he says, was to "identify and address any themes, both good and bad." When asking retail partners how they would define the Englander brand, he heard a similar refrain over and over again: "It's a great product I won't get a phone call about."

This reputation for dependable service and superior manufacturing has endured over the decades and remains one of the biggest draws for many of its existing retail partners. But as Kinsley sees it, while a "great product you won't get a phone call about" is the basis upon which a successful program is built—it is the bare minimum a company should do.



Quality, dependable manufacturing is just the starting point.

"Operationally, we are incredibly strong," he continues. "That means we make a great product that we can distribute over and over again. From a visibility and brand standpoint, we know there's a ton of opportunity and much work to be done. That's where we're putting our focus now because the foundation is set."

The first step to building a stronger, more visible brand was to get clear on what the company was and what it wanted to be moving forward. Next, it was time to develop a new national mattress line-up—one that the company could market and distribute throughout the entire country. As a licensing group, Englander had previously focused on more regional collections, which often made it difficult to develop a sense of marketing cohesion. By focusing its attention on one line-up with a clear set of specs and styling, Englander was able to craft a singular branding story that would be easier for consumers to understand and connect with.

"I think more than ever, relevant brands that are building value in what they do and connecting with people on an emotional level are going to be the ones that separate themselves from the pack," Kinsley explains. "Because when it comes time for consumers to make a decision, they're looking for something they can believe in. They're not looking for commodity products, they're looking for identifiers and signals that say 'That's who I am and that's what I want to be a part of and this is the product I want to own.'"

Debuting at the winter Las Vegas Market, the new Englander collection features a cu-

rated selection of proven materials that have been refined over time. At the top the line, the mattresses are made with a fabric-encased coil support unit, combined with layers of copper-infused latex, copper-infused visco foam, 3" Open Air micro coils, and a cool touch top panel. Designed to reflect its "classic yet modern" feel, the beds are styled with rich color ways including elegant shades of navy, charcoal and taupe.

The inspiration for this collection brought together both Englander's long heritage in the industry and its new vision for the future. As the research and development process got underway, the company looked back through its history for some direction. In the 1970s, Englander was considered one of the top bedding brands in the United States. But even prior to that, it had built a reputation for ingenuity. In fact, Englander was one of the early pioneers of the latex category. At one time, Englander was actually owned by GOODYEAR—which gave the mattress makers access to innovative rubber formulations for creating latex foams. To this day, Kinsley says, both retailers and consumers across many markets in the U.S. associate the Englander brand with latex mattresses.

The chosen focus on latex isn't just an homage to the company's past; the consumer interest in latex foams has grown significantly in recent years. Even more than that, it has become the mattress of choice for some of the most informed buyers. "I've been in the industry for a long time," Kinsley explains. "And when I ask my industry friends what they sleep on,

invariably, it's some combination of pocketed coils and latex. So I thought, let's just do that."

By zeroing in on the kinds of mattresses that industry insiders sleep on at home, the company began developing its new approach to marketing. For many consumers who may be new to the latex category, it can be overwhelming to try to parse through messaging that is bogged down by details on the different processes and formulations. By instead promoting its popularity among those in the know, Englander is able to communicate the superiority of the components more efficiently. And while one may not immediately consider bedding industry executives to be "influencers" in the traditional sense, this kind of personal insight carries with it plenty of value among consumers.

"We want to make mattresses that we would be comfortable giving to our moms," Kinsley explains. "We don't want to complicate it with fake innovation and technology that's really not technology. We want to use what's proven to perform and what's been refined over time and put that in a mattress in ways that we know deliver amazing comfort."

While some licensing groups struggle to get all of their facilities on board with a national line-up, Kinsley is quick to correct that assumption. More than just licensing partners, Englander's factories are owners of the brand—which means they are fully bought in and committed to working together. In the build-up to the new collection's launch, the company did an internal audit of all of these

facilities to ensure a new level of consistency across the board.

"The cascading effect of that is trust with retailers and ultimately with consumers," he explains. "With a wrapped up mattress, it's hard to know what's inside. We want to make sure we can provide some evidence that what the consumer sees online is what they're getting when they bring it home. We just want to take care of people."

More than just offering a great night sleep, this new line-up was also designed to help consumers navigate the shopping experience—and more easily find the model that will work best for their unique needs. That meant paring down the number of options to only the most meaningful. It has a Good, Better, Best step-up story, with each level featuring the choice of plush or firm. Ensuring that this collection will work effectively on the retail floor, each model is tangibly distinct.

"When you're at the Good level, you need to know that this firm feels different than this plush," Kinsley explains. "But also, as you move from Good to Better to Best, all of the plushes feel different. You experience that material difference as you move up the line."

The goal is to provide retailers with a full mattress program that will not only appeal to consumers but minimize the risk of feel fatigue. When presented with too many or too-similar options, the average shopper is much more likely to get overwhelmed and jump ship before making a decision. By carefully curating the line-up, it actually creates an environment in which consumers can be more discerning.

"We, in the mattress industry, are our own worst enemies," Kinsley jokes. "When you go out and talk to retailers, they will say, 'You gotta keep it simple.' And then, somehow along the way, everyone involved makes it more complicated."

This is especially true when it comes to marketing. Understanding that different people are looking for different information at different points of their shopping journey, Englander thoughtfully developed the messaging for this line to engage with consumers without totally inundating them from the start. The information is organized into three levels, starting with "Need To Know" before moving to "Want To Know" and finally culminating in "Expert."

"We're happy to tell everyone what we use in our mattresses because we think that's im-

We have 125 years of history. We own our factories; we have experts in product design and development, and we have a great team to support selling those products. We don't believe in fake innovation. We believe in best-made mattresses and telling it straight.

portant," Kinsley explains. "But we also need to make sure that we only give people the information they want, and the information that's going to benefit them so that they can make an informed purchase. We don't want to take them down a rabbit trail of speak and insider baseball that's not actually going to help them."

In some ways, this new approach to messaging has been informed by the growth of direct-to-consumer mattress brands. It's no secret that many of the DTC start-ups found some of their success by homing in on the confusion surrounding the traditional mattress shopping experience. Englander is also recognizing this pain point, but rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution, it is delivering proven materials and time-tested processes. Put simply, Englander has the experience to back up its claims and the expertise to deliver real quality comfort.

"Anybody can have some third-party slap together a mattress and put a brand on it," Kinsley says. "We have 125 years of history. We own our factories; we have experts in product design and development, and we have a great team to support selling those products. We don't believe in fake innovation. We believe in best-made mattresses and telling it straight."

The next step to reinvigorating the Englander brand is delivering this message to a wider audience. Kinsley acknowledges that this is where the company has dropped the ball

in the past: "We have not created excitement and buzz. We have not been coming up with creative marketing ideas that can help retailers drive their business. We've been doing none of that—and all of that is going to change."

That means equipping its retail partners with enhanced support, offering them new marketing kits filled with a dynamic array of updated assets. For the in-store experience, the company has designed eye-catching POP that includes end of bed card templates, top of bed options, posters, banners, selling sheets and more. These kits also offer a wide selection of digital materials, including style and product imagery, digital ads and templates, videos and social media content. Through these assets, Englander is providing its retail partners with the resources and tools they need to expand their own visibility online, where more and more of today's consumers are starting their shopping journey.

All of these new marketing resources tie back to an overarching theme of simplicity. "From a messaging standpoint, we're focused on this idea that comfort isn't complicated," Kinsley explains. "Sleep is not rocket science. We have products that are easy to understand, and you're going to get great sleep on them. That's it."

The idea behind this approach isn't to dilute the sales process. Rather, it's about honoring its responsibility to the consumer and respecting their needs. Making an effort to minimize confusion is "an example of caring for people," Kinsley says. "Whenever you're able to keep it simple, keep it focused on what truly matters, you help them make a more informed purchase decision."

Above all else, Englander's primary goal moving forward is to provide "simplicity, transparency and the best we can make inside and out," he explains. These are the pillars through which the brand runs all of its product, marketing and business development decisions. And in an industry that is often seen as being confusing or misleading, staying true to such a value system is more meaningful than ever. With this new mindset in place, Englander has found a way to build upon its legacy with fresh, forward-thinking programs—and, in doing so, has set the stage to reemerge as an industry leader once again. //

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