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## The Dealer Margin Play

Conceived, designed and assembled in California, Dash and Interra are offered exclusively through the Friant Advantage Dealer Program.

By Rob Kirkbride

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 Not at the Mart. Product and company located at the Chicago Renaissance Hotel.

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Dash

**W**hen Paul Friant hears competitors talk about the demise of system furniture, he chuckles a bit (and wishes them the best of luck selling whatever it is they believe will replace systems). Friant, chief executive officer and president of Friant & Associates, understands that styles change, but systems will remain an important part of the office for many years to come.

He has reason to be confident. The company is one of the fastest growing in the office furniture industry by following a formula that consists of creating low-cost high-quality products through a streamlined manufacturing process.

"I think every time someone tells me the (systems) market is going away, I love it because that market is not going away," he said. "The vast majority of sales will always have that (systems) request. We still move a lot of 8x8s with 64 inch panels. Where are you getting your jobs?"

Friant believes open offices can only go so far. He is suspect of the wildly open floor plans that some manufacturers are

pushing. "What happens when you get to the point where you are not getting the privacy you need?" Friant asked.

Friant said he believes his company's two new products, Interra and Dash, give specifiers the best of both worlds. Designers can create light scaled offices that still give workers some sense of privacy and a good amount of storage.

Dash is a smart, simple desking system that Friant said is easy to specify, install and configure. It has clean lines and a modern aesthetic and can be used to create anything from an open to a private office space.

Dash offers several upscale components – with below in-

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Interra

dustry average pricing – that can be mixed and matched. The components include a desk, pedestal, storage towers, credenza, wardrobe, cabinets and overhead storage that can be arranged in multiple configurations. In addition, the entire line can be used in conjunction with Interra, Friant's new segmented panel system, to extend its design possibilities.

Even though Dash is reasonably priced, it is still stylish, designed with contemporary finishes and details such as sleek pulls, tapered legs and desk surfaces and a hidden power trough for easy power and data access. Dash comes in three work surfaces and cabinet laminate options (in espresso, maple and cherry).

Conceived, designed and assembled in California, Dash and Interra are offered exclusively through the Friant Advantage Dealer Program. The Advantage Program is designed to promote deeper relationships with participating dealers. In effect, the Advantage Program will foster sales with dealers that see Friant's product as "go-to," not an alternative product competing with refurbished or "as is." Friant wants to home in on the dealers that are most interested in leveraging Friant's value proposition, which is based on design-forward products that offers high profits for dealers and affordability for the end-users. The company hopes to reward dealers that want to form closer, more cohesive relationships. Friant hopes to attract about 200-250 dealers to the Advantage Program.

"One thing that I think the dealer community is going to like about the Advantage Program is that they are not going to run into the next guy down the street that is going to be selling Fri-

ant," he said. "The objective is for the dealer to make money. If you keep running into a competitor that is selling the same products, it makes it difficult."

The company also hopes its two new flexible products are a hit with the dealer community. "Dash works hard to be easy. It can be rearranged in so many configurations, it adapts to your needs, even if they change," Friant said. "Dash brings a real pop to any space and instantly adds modern appeal."

Interra is a new systems line that uses 30 percent less material and less waste at the end of its useful life. Other products will be launched, including the addition of the high back Cellesse task seat, additional seating in the task and lounge categories and expanded standard fabric options.

Because of its price point, Friant is not in a position to dictate office furniture styling. Few are going to follow the company for design. The company excels at turning orders around quickly and at a low price.

"Furniture all looks the same, pretty much," Friant said. "The features might be different, but it's how you get to the playing field. One of the important (parts of the distribution system) is the dealer. The dealer is so important to the future of the job."

Though Friant's Advantage Program, the dealer is able to get the end-user a much lower price out of the box. "Our objective is to let the dealer get more profitable. I'd like us to get back to the days of the late 1980s, the days dealers made a lot of money. That is my objective with these products and this program," he said. ▮