

# The Link

Newsletter | April 2025



## Building a Stronger Industry

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA



I don't know about you, but March flew right on by, and yet, it was full of action and seeing HMA members at different industry events.

We kicked things off with HMA's 2025 Southern Regional Meeting in Memphis, Tennessee. Joined by members of the Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association and industry suppliers, HMA members were

able to get a first-hand look at the facilities of Classic American Hardwoods, Marietta Wood Supply, Marietta Dry Kilns, and Shomaker Lumber Co. We spent a lot of time networking together and put even more miles behind us on the highway, but it was time well spent.

Thank you to our tour hosts for your southern hospitality, as well as our generous sponsors—**Baillie Group, Jones Lumber Company, McDonough Manufacturing Company, New River Hardwoods,** and **Peak North America**—for providing such a great experience in the Volunteer State.

Next up is our 2025 National Conference and Expo, which will take place **Wednesday-Friday, June 11-13**, in Knoxville, Tennessee. We have an exciting lineup of learning sessions planned, and a few other surprises up our sleeves.

Most importantly, make sure to register before rates increase on May 16. And as a reminder, the hotel reservation deadline is May 6. I encourage you to take care of business today. More details can be found on the next few pages and online at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org).

I'd also like to recognize the companies that have signed on as sponsors for our signature event. Their logos are displayed on the right. And if you'd like to ensure your company has a greater presence in Knoxville, send me an email at [ian@hardwood.org](mailto:ian@hardwood.org) or call me at **412.244.0440** to discuss options.

Talk soon!

## Thank You, NatCon Sponsors!

Thank you to the following companies for sponsoring HMA's 2025 National Conference and Expo.



## Register Today for the 2025 Hardwood Federation Fly-In

*Taxes. Trade. Tariffs. Regulations.* Federal policy impacting you and your business is currently being debated on Capitol Hill. Don't depend on others to speak for you! Join the Hardwood Federation's Fly-In to D.C., **May 13-15**, and make your voice heard!

Your meetings will be based on where you live and work. You and a group of your peers will visit Congressional offices, share your business' story and insight, and become an advocate for policies that support the U.S. hardwood industry.

Learn more at [HardwoodFederation.com](https://HardwoodFederation.com).



## Getting Down to Business in Knoxville

HMA's **2025 National Conference and Expo** will take place at the Knoxville Convention Center in Knoxville, Tennessee, **Wednesday-Friday, June 11-13**. This year's theme is *Evolution* and our schedule is packed with timely and informative topics to equip you with the knowledge and know-how to adapt to an ever-evolving industry. And of course, you won't want to miss the industry's premier networking opportunities. Mix and mingle with industry veterans and the next generation of leaders, share wisdom and ask questions, visit with equipment manufacturers and industry suppliers, and enjoy all that Knoxville has to offer. Will you be there?

### Register Today and Save

Online registration is available at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org). As a reminder, HMA's signature event is open to all hardwood lumber producers, processors, and suppliers—members, non-members, and stakeholders.

- **HMA Members & Promotion Contributors | \$650**
- **SCMA Members | \$650**
- **Non-Members | \$800**

*Note: Rates increase by 10% after May 16, 2025.*

### Book Your Stay

Reimagined and redesigned, the Marriott Knoxville Downtown will be our home away from home for our stay in the Volunteer State. Located at 525 Henley St, the modern hotel offers posh accommodations, good eats, and a state-of-the-art fitness center. For those looking to take in some summer sun, enjoy the 1982 World's Fair Park outside. Learn more at [Marriott.com](https://Marriott.com).



Book your room online at [tiny.cc/natcon2025](https://tiny.cc/natcon2025) or by calling **888.236.2427**. Be sure to mention "Hardwood Manufacturers Association" to secure our discounted room rate of \$187/night. Act soon, the reservation deadline is **Tuesday, May 6**.

## Exploring Knoxville

During your stay in Knoxville, there will be plenty of opportunities to explore the booming city. Check out the shopping and food at Market Square or the art in Knoxville's Museum of Art. Take in the landscape at Volunteer Landing Park or marvel at the Sunsphere, site of the 1982 World's Fair. The University of Tennessee's legendary Neyland Stadium is a few blocks from our hotel, and did we mention Dollywood is less than an hour away? When making your travel arrangements, consider bringing your family and exploring Knoxville!



## NatCon Schedule at a Glance

The hardwood industry and your businesses are facing serious challenges. From losing market share to wood-look products and dealing with labor shortages and retention to updating outdated equipment, financing facility upgrades, and navigating an uncertain economy, there's a lot on the minds of HMA members and industry stakeholders.

Here's a brief preview of what's on the docket in Knoxville. Join us to learn more about the hardwood industry's *Evolution*.

### Turning Around an Industry

An historic industry filled with generational family businesses and legacies, that was once king of American agricultural production in its sector, has been infiltrated by lookalike products. Real vs. fake. Sound familiar? The struggle is not limited to the hardwood industry.



**Farrah Newberry**, VP of Agriculture and Environmental Affairs for The Dairy Alliance, will take the stage to discuss how the dairy industry paved a path for the future of milk and dairy products by investing in promotion, education, and research.

What can the hardwood industry learn from a similar industry's strategy and success?

### ForestryWorks at Work

ForestryWorks is a collaborative effort between the Forest Workforce Training Institute and various partners within the forest industry. Currently operating in eight states, the initiative educates students, parents, and teachers about career opportunities in the forest industry while providing pathways for students and job seekers to start their future career in the industry.

The Tennessee Forestry Association's **Larry Pitts**, Workforce Development coordinator, and **Caley Peyton**, Education and Outreach coordinator will be with us to shed some light on ForestryWorks and how the initiative is working to create a sustainable pipeline of qualified workers for the forestry and forest products industry for generations to come.



### US Forest Service Wood Innovations Grants

You've heard about the USDA Forest Service's Wood Innovations Grant (WIG) program. You've read about other companies securing grants. You've thought about applying for a grant the next time around. How do you get started?

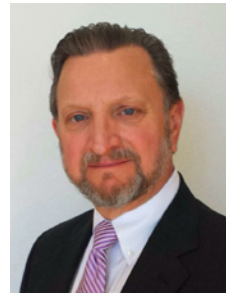
HMA is welcoming back **Marcus Taylor**, Wood Innovations coordinator for the Southern Region, to provide an overview of the WIG program, discuss how a grant can help your company improve operations and upgrade equipment, review what companies are eligible for funding, offer guidance on the application process, touch on other available funding opportunities, and answer our questions.



### Let's Talk Insurance

There are a lot of questions surrounding insurance, especially in the lumber industry. Are you covered? Do you have enough insurance? Do you have too much? What do you need to know about your current policy and risk management considerations when it's time to renew or search for a new provider?

Three industry colleagues representing the retail, carrier, and broker perspectives on insurance will sit down to discuss these questions and more (pictured left to right).



- **Corey Bounds**, Risk Assessment and Claims Director of Engineering, Continental Underwriters
- **Lindsey DiGangi**, Vice President of Field Operations, Pennsylvania Lumbermens Mutual Insurance Company;
- **Robin Little**, Director of McGriff Insurance Services – National Forest Product Practice (now a Marsh & McLennan LLC agency)

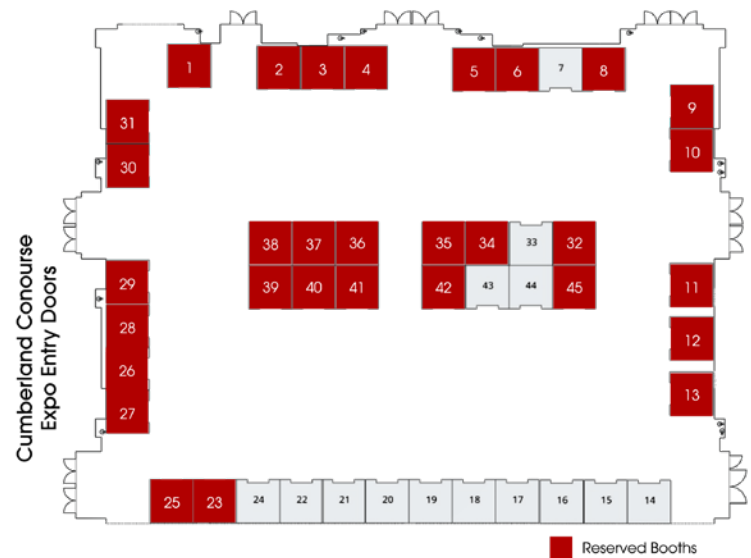
Our full schedule can be found online at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org). Check back often as learning sessions, events, other updates are made.

## NatCon Exhibit Space is Available

If your company specializes in manufacturing equipment for—or providing services to—the hardwood industry, then Knoxville will be the place to be to meet with current and potential customers. Reserve your booth space today.

Booths are reserved on a first-come, first-served basis—and they're going fast. For an up-to-date look at available booths, visit [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org). Reach out to Ian Faight at [ian@hardwood.org](mailto:ian@hardwood.org) to secure your exhibit space and package.

This year, we're trying something new with the **Tennessee Trail** sponsorship to drive foot traffic to the Expo booths. The sponsorship supports our valued exhibitors and encourages vendor engagement during Expo hours. HMA members who successfully complete various stops along the trail will be entered to win prizes. Call [412.244.0440](tel:412.244.0440) to learn more.



## Tee Up at Dead Horse Lake Golf Club

Attention golfers! HMA will host its third annual Golf Tournament in conjunction with NatCon at the Dead Horse Lake Golf Club on **Wednesday, June 11**. Tee times begin at 8 am, and accommodations will be made to golfers attending HMA and SCMA meetings. The course is approximately 20 minutes from the Marriott Knoxville Downtown. Golfers are responsible for their own transportation.

The cost is \$75 and includes golf cart rental (driving range not included). Registration is available at [HMAmembers.org](https://HMAmembers.org). Spots are limited, so sign up today!

A number of sponsorship opportunities also are available. Funds raised will be donated to the Real American Hardwood Coalition. And remember, you can be a sponsor even if you're not golfing.

Questions? Email golf organizer Peter McCarty at [PeterM@tsman.com](mailto:PeterM@tsman.com).



## Limited Spots Available for NextGen Leaders Council

Do you have an up-and-coming, future leader, who could benefit from professional and personal development? HMA's NextGen Leaders Council will begin a two-year term this June. Membership is open to anyone under the age of 40, who is employed

by an HMA member company. Two spots also are reserved for industry suppliers.

For more information or to nominate a Council member, email Ian Faight at [ian@hardwood.org](mailto:ian@hardwood.org).

## Hardwood for the Bedroom

by Wendy Silverstein

A Real American Hardwood® bed is more than a piece of furniture—it's a statement of craftsmanship, materiality, and enduring style. From the rich warmth of walnut to the crisp elegance of maple, American hardwoods offer a depth of character that elevates bedroom design. The choice of species, grain pattern, and finish helps determine how well the bed integrates into a broader interior vision—whether proudly traditional, smoothly transitional, or adventurously modern. Beyond trends, a well-crafted hardwood bed reflects a commitment to quality and a connection to natural materials that enhance the space. Here are three beds that do just that.



Photo courtesy of Thos. Moser

Founded more than 50 years ago, the Thos. Moser workshop in Auburn, Maine, handcrafts heirloom-quality furniture using sustainable American hardwoods. Its wide range of products—including chairs, tables, desks,

and case goods—are rooted in Shaker and Arts & Crafts traditions, updated for today's lifestyles. A classic example of the company's elegantly restrained style, the Ellipse bed is inspired by furniture produced after World War II, when resources were scarce and used with careful economy. Available in cherry or walnut, the bed has a graceful simplicity that would complement many room styles.



Photo courtesy of Jeff Holt

Amish furniture making is a time-honored tradition, particularly in Ohio, where workshops are known for their exceptional craftsmanship, use of solid American hardwoods, and traditional joinery techniques,

such as mortise and tenon or dovetail construction—all done without modern automation. One such

workshop, Frog Pond Furniture in Millersburg, produces the handsome Bristol collection, which includes a bed, armoire, nightstand, and several other pieces. Made of solid white oak, the collection has a rustic honesty that's pleasingly straightforward without feeling heavy or unpolished—perfect for bringing a touch of artisanal charm to even the most urbane bedroom.

For a summer house on Massachusetts' historic Nantucket Island, Walpole-based interior designer Cynthia Hayes commissioned a custom bed that gives the traditional four-



Photo courtesy of Matthew Williams

poster a sleek, contemporary makeover. Made by Scott James Furniture & Design, a Tiverton, Rhode Island, workshop, the glossy painted-poplar frame and headboard create a boldly graphic effect in the light-and-airy bedroom, referencing the heritage-rich, old-world location while keeping the overall atmosphere breezily modern. It's a great example of what can be done with hardwood given a bit of imagination—and a furniture budget that supports fully custom design.

Wendy Silverstein is a former editor at *Architectural Digest*, *Home*, *Kitchen & Bath* Customer Planner, and *Home/Style* magazines. A consultant to the design industry, she works closely with interior designers, architects and other professionals in the field.



American Hardwoods™

## HMA Promotion \$s at Work

Visit [HardwoodInfo.com](https://www.hardwoodinfo.com) for more inspiring content to share with your audiences. Editorial features like *Hardwood for the Bedroom* are posted regularly.

To learn more about the American Hardwood Information Center's promotion and education initiatives, reach out to [info@hardwood.org](mailto:info@hardwood.org).

## Staying Social with Real American Hardwood

by Ian Faight

Executive Vice President, HMA | Digital Community Manager, RAHC

Last month, the Real American Hardwood Coalition (RAHC) continued sharing inspiring project photos showcasing the natural charm and character of Real American Hardwood® products and educating followers on a variety of applications. Following is a brief recap of what you may have missed.

### Welcome to Spring

March 20 marked the first day of spring, and the RAHC reminded its followers that Real American Hardwood trees will soon be sprouting new growth and our forests will be displaying vibrant shades of green.

To spur engagement, the RAHC asked followers to

share photos of budding hardwood trees they see in their backyards and on their adventures.

See the post on [Instagram](#).

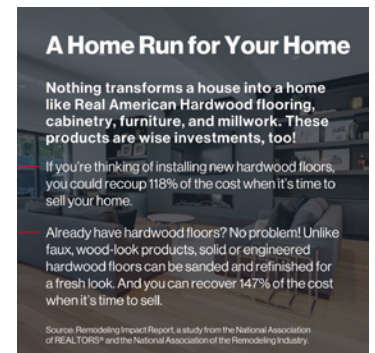
### Celebrating America's Pastime

March 27 was Opening Day in Major League Baseball. The RAHC's leadoff post for the new season made a connection between America's pastime and Real American Hardwood.

The educational post spotlighted the three most common species of Real American Hardwood used for baseball bats in MLB (hard maple, ash, and birch),

produced a Grand Slam of forest facts, and rounded it out with why hardwood flooring delivers a Home Run when it comes to ROI for home improvement projects.

See why Real American Hardwood should be in your starting lineup on the field and in your home on [Instagram](#).



## Cypress is Making Headlines

The Southern Cypress Manufacturers Association (SCMA) recently published an editorial feature, titled *Storage Stunners for Every Room of Your Home*.

To date, the article has earned more than 2,600 online and print placements, and reached a potential audience of 186 million potential readers in all 50 states and 185 metro markets.

The placements produced an estimated advertising value of \$1.675 million.

Give the feature a read at [CypressInfo.org](https://www.cypressinfo.org).

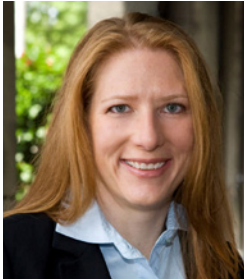


As seen in *The Dallas Morning News*' Real Estate section, March 16, 2025.

## The Latest from Capitol Hill

by Dana Lee Cole

Executive Director, Hardwood Federation



### Tax Back on the Front Burner

In the last days of March, both houses of Congress returned to Washington from a weeklong recess to begin a sprint until the Easter break. The focus is on forging a compromise budget resolution that will need to pass both chambers to kickstart the process of developing a budget reconciliation bill that will

be the vehicle to reviving and extending the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act tax benefits, among other items. The House and Senate have passed their own budget resolutions, but the measures were markedly different. Notably, the Senate's version does not include a tax component. All indications are that a compromise resolution will be comprehensive and include language renewing and extending the 100% bonus depreciation benefit that has been phasing out, the research and development tax credit that has expired, and the Section 199A deduction for S-Corporations and other pass-through structures that will expire at the end of this year. Congressional leaders hope to wrap up the budget resolution process and finalize and pass a single, comprehensive budget reconciliation bill before Memorial Day.

The Hardwood Federation team has been attending fundraisers and meetings with members of Congress and their staff, advocating support for renewing these key business tax incentives.

### Waiting on Trade Announcements

The Trump Administration is poised to announce their plans to impose reciprocal tariffs on global trading partners on April 2. How these will look, who will be targeted, and for how long are all outstanding questions. While the President said previously that tariff rates will be lower than expected, tariffs will still be implemented next week. Obviously of most interest to the hardwood industry are tariffs on our major export markets and those that impact countries where we have closely integrated manufacturing relationships, like Canada.

In anticipation of the announcement, senior level Administration officials have been busy talking to U.S. trading partners. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer met with his Chinese counterpart this week for a "frank discussion." Canada, Japan, and the E.U. have been more vocal about taking retaliatory action.

The Federation will continue to track this issue and update you on developments.

### The Latest on Transportation Topics

■ The U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) recently issued **proposed remedies** in response to an investigation against China for **trading practices** that seek to achieve maritime dominance while manipulating markets. Although the investigation opened during the Biden Administration, the current Administration has issued the proposed remedies, which include "significant port service fees" against Chinese-built ships. According to a study by the shipping industry, USTR's proposed fees will increase container shipping costs by at least 25%, adding approximately \$30 billion in annual costs on U.S. businesses and farmers.

The Hardwood Federation, and its allies in the ocean shipping coalition, sent a **letter** to USTR urging the Administration to reconsider its proposed remedies in a manner that will contain China's market manipulation while mitigating additional financial burdens on U.S. exports.

■ In mid-March, Representative Tony Wied (R-WI) reintroduced the Safe Routes Act. This practical legislation would allow trucks traveling at the maximum gross vehicle weight on state roads to access the federal interstate highway system for short distances when it makes sense to do so. As we know, many states allow 5 axle rigs heavier than 80,000 pounds to travel on state roads. Unfortunately, federal highways are hard capped at 80,000 pounds. This results in trucks having to traverse narrower roads through small towns and cross walks on their way from the harvesting site to the sawmill, when a safer, more efficient route could be available on the interstate.

Key industry champions like Glenn "GT" Thompson (R-PA) already have signed onto the bill, as have T&I Committee members Mike Ezell (R-MS) and Mike Collins (R-GA). Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME) also is on the bill. The Hardwood Federation team is building out the cosponsor list on this legislation in hopes of having its provisions included in the Highway Bill rewrite.

■ In addition, Rep. Mike Collins (R-GA) is preparing to reintroduce the Freight Restriction Elimination for Safer Hauling Act of 2025. The bill is a close cousin of the Safe Routes Act in that it would allow a state to waive federal gross vehicle weight limits on its portion of the interstate for trucks hauling covered "perishable commodities"—defined to include raw logs, pulpwood, biomass, and wood chips.

## How to Lead During Uncertain Times

by Tony Cimorelli

Director of Marketing and Communications, The Baillie Group

When we say, “uncertain times,” everyone likely knows what we’re talking about. Dramatic changes are taking place constantly around the world. Even in our specific industry, the North American hardwoods lumber industry, change seems to be everywhere. Sawmill production changes, international market challenges and technological advancements and workforce availability changes impact what we do and how we do it daily. That’s why effective leadership is so badly needed in today’s business landscape.



Throughout the Baillie Group, we adhere to the principles of “servant leadership.” In our view, every individual in the company is worthy of respect. We actively solicit feedback, and we listen to what employees have to say. We are persistent in our efforts to guide and inspire others, and we hold ourselves accountable for the commitments we make.

**This leadership approach** has proved successful in these turbulent times. Here are more tips on providing strong leadership in a time of global disruption:

**Build trust at every juncture.** Effective leadership starts with a promise to build (or strengthen) trust between company leaders and the people they oversee. Leaders who set clear expectations and practice transparency about the company’s strengths and weaknesses are more likely to engender trust among their workforce.

If significant changes are needed to maintain business stability, let your workforce know when. Employees are more inclined to accept drastic measures if they understand why such steps are being undertaken.

**Share as much information as possible.** In uncertain times, there’s a genuine hunger among employees to understand what’s going on.

“The more frequently you can update them, the more in the loop they’ll feel, which can go a long way toward curbing anxiety,” notes Nevada State Bank. Providing updates motivates employees to be “be ready to to continue fighting for the success of your business.”

**Practice adaptability.** Cultivating the ability to adapt to changes is a key process for effective leadership. But a business leader’s skill in confronting changes in technology and the marketplace only works if employees play a part in the process.

*Entrepreneur* advocates decentralizing authority where possible, because it encourages team members “to make decisions within their scope of work to **reduce bottlenecks.**” Also, boost confidence by equipping employees “with the tools, training and mentorship needed to make informed decisions.

**Pay attention to how employees feel.** During uncertain times, employees “worry about the stability of the business, while some feel helpless and overwhelmed,” notes Forbes. The key for business leaders is to “draw on your emotional intelligence to lead your team through the rough patch.

For us, whether it is leading our foresters, sawyers, species captains or lumber handlers, being able to do it effectively and successfully is critical to our success.

What other tactics do you use when leading others? Let us know. We are always looking to improve!

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## Navigating the Marketing Funnel

by Sara Skwaryk

Communications and Administrative Coordinator, HMA

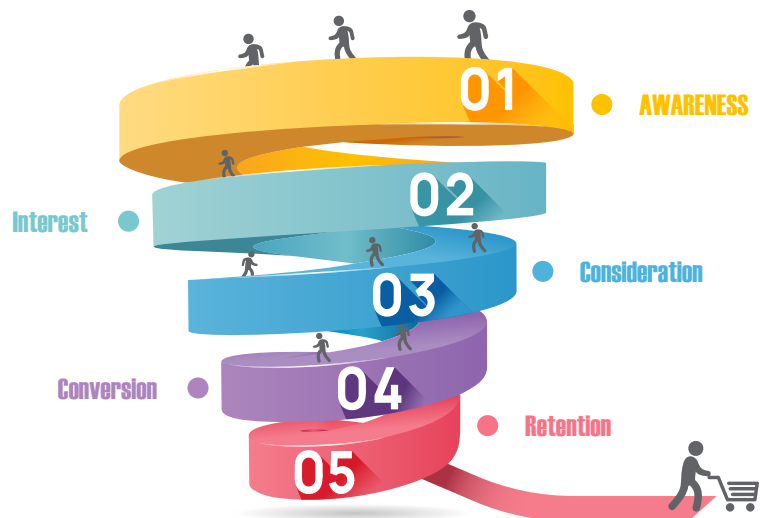
Though it may not always seem so strategic, there is a method to the madness when it comes to understanding customer purchasing behavior and how it impacts your business.

In the marketing world, there is a visual representation of what the purchasing process is like for customers, and it's referred to as the marketing funnel. Following this model can help dissect what methods you may be missing or where you can perhaps spend more resources to boost your company's brand awareness among purchasers.

The first step is **awareness**. Arguably the most critical stage in the purchasing process, it is where you are laying the foundation for customers' future interactions with your business. In this stage, you want to create awareness by building a connection with customers. The most common way to establish your business is through content such as blog posts, engaging social media posts, and targeted online ads that provide high-quality insight into your business.

The next step is **interest**. In this stage, customers have recognized your business as one they may be interested in pursuing. With this, it is important to establish your business as a leader in the field by showcasing your expertise and benefits. What separates your business from others? A great way to do this is through informative writing and videos, and interactive webinars that aim to answer common questions while ultimately positioning your offerings as the solution to the potential customer's needs. Providing education at this stage has proven to be important, as you are nurturing the interest of the customer and ultimately guiding them through their decision process.

Next comes the **consideration** stage. During this phase, potential customers are evaluating your products against others, so it is important to establish yourself as the ideal choice. Comparative guides, FAQs, and customer testimonials are great ways to showcase your focus on a quality product and great service from start to finish.



The fourth step is **conversion**. In this stage, customers are ready to make their purchasing decision, so it is important to recognize that this stage ensures that your brand is prioritizing simple and appealing messaging and processes that encourage completing a purchase.

Finally, is the **retention** stage. This final part of the funnel is all about keeping your customers coming back after that first buy. There are a few ways you can do this, either offering follow-up communications through feedback and post-purchase support is a great way to keep them engaged. Additionally, you can continue to share educational content on getting the most from their product or service to keep the learning going.

The marketing funnel is a great way to help your business decide on methods that work best for you and your customer. Sometimes, going back to the basics brings new ideas that spark positive growth and change.

Source: *Mastering the Marketing Funnel Stages and Tactics for Emerging Brands* by Transid Media.



*The Link* is published each month exclusively for members of the Hardwood Manufacturers Association. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the HMA; HMA staff welcomes comments and questions.

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