
Crafting a Legacy

Jennifer Showers' Vision and Leadership Shapes Kellex's Senior Living Division

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Jennifer Showers didn't set out to join the furniture industry, but her journey from studying Family and Community Services with an emphasis on adults and aging at Michigan State University to leading Kellex Seating's national sales and senior living division is a testament to her drive and an innate understanding of people. As Vice President – Senior Living at Kellex, she has played a critical role in shaping the company's direction, ensuring that its furniture not only looks good but serves a vital purpose in the evolving senior living market, meeting the physical and comfort needs of aging residents. Under her leadership, Kellex has built a reputation for balancing aesthetics, durability, and functionality while pioneering thoughtful, resident-focused design solutions.



Jennifer Showers
VP Sales/Senior Living



Sales Training

Finding a Career in Furniture

Initially planning for a career in gerontology, Showers accepted a position as a project manager for an independent sales rep to save for graduate school. Kellex was one of the furniture lines she worked with, and over time she developed a deep appreciation for the company's customer-first philosophy.

She moved on to a sales position at Kellex, where she learned from two of the company's founders, Chris Rice and Doug Fawcett, about the importance of partnership over hard sales tactics. In 2004, Kellex offered her a management role as Director of National Sales. Showers embraced the opportunity, marking the beginning of a career that would see her leave an indelible mark both on the company and the industry.

Showers' approach is deeply informed by her background in community services and her early experiences working in a nursing home. She recalls seeing firsthand how traditional furniture failed to meet the needs of seniors—with sofas that were too deep, cushions too soft, or seat heights that made it difficult to stand. When Kellex identified a gap in the market for high-quality, hospitality-inspired furniture tailored for senior living, Showers spearheaded the initiative to address it.

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Designing for Senior Living

"Jennifer started our senior living division from scratch," says Kellex Partner and COO Bryan Beam. "She created it." Rather than making assumptions about how to design the pieces, she and her team sought direct guidance from senior living designers and specifiers. "She traveled extensively with our VP of Manufacturing to interview potential customers in the senior living space to learn from them what was needed or missing in the marketplace," Beam adds. "She then developed a business plan, developed products, and formed a sales team."

Building trust was one of the biggest challenges in entering the senior living market. "We had to prove ourselves," Showers explains. "We were unknown in that space, and we had to show that we understood the needs of residents." Kellex succeeded by ensuring that every design choice—from seat depth and cushion firmness to armrest height—was made with the user's well-being in mind.



Leadership and Mentorship

Today, the company's senior living furniture, which has been its fastest-growing division, is as thoughtfully designed as its hospitality collections, proving that style and accessibility don't have to be mutually exclusive. "The resident always comes first," Showers says. "If it's not going to work for them, we won't make it."

Adds Kellex Sales Representative Jill Jeatran: "Jennifer has a wealth of knowledge about senior living and understands what works best for this demographic. She does her research; just because something looks great doesn't mean it's the right fit for senior living. She knows what works for this market and makes sure every piece in the line is tailored to meet the needs of seniors."

As a leader, Showers fosters a company culture centered on collaboration and empowerment. She credits Kellex's success to the trust placed in her by its founders and the team's collective effort. "Chris and Doug didn't know much about senior living when we started, but they believed in me," she says. "It takes a whole team—from design to manufacturing—to make this work." Her leadership style reflects this philosophy, ensuring that colleagues are given the space to innovate and take ownership of their ideas. She also encourages the next generation of professionals to speak up and take initiative. "You just have to go for it," she advises. "Ask for what you want and don't be afraid to share your ideas."

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The Future of Senior Living Design

Looking ahead, Showers sees a future where senior living design continues to evolve alongside changing demographics. The baby boomer generation, she notes, has different expectations than previous ones, demanding higher style, greater flexibility, and features like integrated technology. "They want power sources for their devices, seating for theaters, bars, and open kitchens—spaces that didn't even exist in senior living communities 20 years ago," she says. The industry must continue adapting to meet these needs, and Kellex is poised to lead the way.

Moreover, as the senior population grows, Showers predicts that accessibility-focused design will become more mainstream across hospitality and commercial spaces. "There's going to be a shift," she explains. "Just like car safety features originally designed for older drivers now benefit everyone, elements of senior living furniture will start influencing design across industries."



A Lasting Impact

Showers' trajectory is a testament to the power of passion and adaptability. What started as a detour turned into a fulfilling career that has reshaped an entire sector of the furniture industry. Notes Larry Parsons, VP of Manufacturing: "Jennifer having a dream all those years ago is proof that if you are willing to put in the hard work and ask questions—without getting bogged down with all the can'ts—dreams can come true."

Through her work at Kellex, she has built a senior living line that is one of the leaders in the industry, all while championing a people-first approach to design. In fact, some of Kellex's first senior living customers—including MTMC, Direct Supply, Phoenix Textiles, and Spellman Brady & Company—are loyal to this day. Showers views these customers as the experts and advocates for them. "If you surround yourself with the right people and have a great team," she says, "you can do some really amazing things."

"Jennifer led the way in designing furniture that seamlessly combines scale, safety, and functionality for senior living residents, all while maintaining the sophisticated style of residential design," says Founder and President Chris Rice. "Her original vision was to elevate the industry by creating beautiful and supportive pieces—a perfect blend of form and function. I am ever grateful for her vision, leadership, and friendship. She is truly remarkable and appreciated by the entire Kellex family."



Jennifer Showers & Chris Rice