Retail Innovation Shout-Out: West Elm and Etsy Bring Local Artists to a Broader Audience

by Hala Hassoun

Since beginning their collaboration in 2011, the West Elm and Etsy companies have helped each other venture into new business opportunities. The partnership began with West Elm using Etsy products as props in its catalog. Next came Etsy pop-up shops where Etsy artisans were given the opportunity to set up their products in a local West Elm store.

As consumer appetites for locally-sourced, hand-crafted products increased, West Elm began its LOCAL initiative, which brought the works of local artists into its stores. This initiative provided artists with a more targeted audience than they might otherwise reach on Etsy’s website of over 20 million products. It also allowed each West Elm store to differentiate itself by offering unique local items to its customers.

Meanwhile, Etsy’s experience in brick-and-mortar stores has led to a new wholesale business that has expanded beyond West Elm to support Nordstrom as well as other small boutiques and museum stores. Etsy Wholesale connects retailers with local sellers and provides a forum for sellers to learn from each other. Since many of Etsy’s artisans are sole proprietors, having access to experienced sellers helps them learn the retail ropes and ramp up quickly for wholesale orders.

The Etsy-West Elm partnership has provided new growth opportunities for both companies and is a great example of retailers finding innovative ways to reach out to customers.

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