

Grand Award – Small Company Ayers Furniture

There is a very special business in a small Southwest Wisconsin town that has defied the odds and continues to defy convention. It is a very old business with a very bold business model. Over 78 years, it has succeeded when others have failed, and it still flourishes today. The business is Ayers Furniture, In Ridgeway.

Bill Ayers opened the furniture store in 1940, and soon invited his two brothers Roy and Gordon to join the operation. Their business model incorporated four core values: providing the very best customer service, offering quality products from quality manufacturers, fair pricing, and always taking an active part in the Southwest Wisconsin communities they served.

That business model has paid off. The store is still located in the same Ridgeway building where it started, although it has expanded to several surrounding buildings, incorporating more than 50,000 square feet of space for furniture. It also still features a small sales force. But its customer base has expanded over the years and now people come to Ayers from all over the region. Second and even third generations of families continue to patronize a business that treats them so well.

What makes Ayers so special? They guarantee high quality furniture and a wide range of in-stock choices. They guarantee the lowest prices. They offer free delivery and setup, promptly and when promised. In fact, free delivery means to just about anywhere, whether it is five, ten, fifty or more miles away. Finally, they promise customer satisfaction and will take the extra step to make certain a patron is pleased with their experience.

In the 1980s, Roy's sons Gerry and Tony joined the business as partners, and son Rick joined the sales force. A few years later, Gerry purchased Portage Furniture, which allowed the overall company to increase its wholesale buying power as well as its service area. In 2016, Gerry's sons Aaron and Austin took over the Portage location.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy aspects of the Ayers Furniture business model is its commitment to the communities it serves. The family's generosity and compassion have been felt in Ridgeway, Hollandale, Dodgeville, Barneveld, Mt. Horeb and countless other small communities. They help individuals, groups, churches, schools, and people in need. In 2017 alone, the business received 300 requests for donations; all were granted. Is it any wonder that customers are as committed to Ayers as the furniture store is to its customers? On more than one occasion, Ayers Furniture has been recognized as the "Iowa County Business of the Year."

Judges were impressed by Ayers's three generations of commitment to its employees, its customers, and its community.

The Grand Award in the Small Company category goes to Ayers Furniture, of Ridgeway.

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