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Office Interiors VP Sets Up New Shop  
By Ben Wood

Published on the website on February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Two office furniture industry vets are joining forces to launch their own sales agency, and they already represent an impressive stable of brands.

Scott Hipson and Chris Holland have formed h2 Atlantic Agencies, an independent office furniture manufacturers rep agency serving Atlantic Canada.

Dartmouth-native Hipson was vice-president at Office Interiors furniture dealers with five showrooms in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. He worked there for 16 years and prior to that was at Atlantic Business Interiors for five years.

"I've always had an entrepreneurial spirit and I've always been interested in the sales representative side," Hipson said.

"It really has to do with change and a new challenge."

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They are setting up a showroom on Brownlow Avenue in Burnside, which they plan to open next month.

The pair has 50 years of combined experience as furniture sales reps. They worked together on a number of engagements and started to talk about forming a partnership over the last few months.

Hipson left Jim Mills' Office Interiors on good terms and said they will be one of the dealerships his new agency will work with on behalf of its brands.

Holland was an independent rep, running his company, IOS Marketing Ltd., for 10 years. h2 inherits eight of his brands and adds Krug and Groupe Lacasse.

Holland grew up in Sydney, where he started and ran Preferred Office Environments for four years.

They hope to grow IOS Marketing's revenues by 40% in their first year. Holland says about half of sales are to furniture dealers and the other half to individuals.

Commission ranges in the industry are in the single digits, Holland said.

"We have to sell millions a year in order to achieve what we need to achieve," Holland said in an interview.

On top of its 10 brands, h2 is in talks to represent a textile line and an outdoor furniture manufacturer, Holland said.

The agency's territory covers the four Atlantic provinces. Newfoundland is one of the hottest markets right now, Holland said. He said he's happy he can now divide the travelling with Hipson.

Holland says the big trend in office furniture is "benching," where employees set up work stations (often temporary) along long benches. This allows for more flexibility and makes it easier to set up more power and internet connections.

Employers are doing away with Dilbert-style cubicles and opting for shorter dividers, which bring in more natural light.

Hipson's sisters both own local insurance companies. Suzy MacLellan owns Founders Insurance Group Inc. and Christine Gaudreau is a co-owner at OTC Insurance Brokers Inc..

Hipson's son is Jordan Hipson, who hosted the TV show At Home With Jordan Hipson that ran on Bell Aliant TV in 2013.

Jordan has started working with his aunt at Founders, and, at 20, is one of the youngest licensed brokers in the area.

h2 currently represents the following furniture brands:

- AIS (benching-style desk maker)
- EGAN
- Groupe Lacasse
- Interna
- krug
- nienkamper
- OSP Furniture
- SitOnIt Seating (custom chairs built in California)
- Spacefile
- Workrite Ergonomics (leading manufacturer of standing desks)

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