

Slick Product Makes Homeowners Happy

Original 'Magic Sliders' prove that cheap imitations are not created equal

Anytime a truly innovative product hits the marketplace, it enjoys a level of popularity unrivaled by competition. But to have staying power, "new" isn't enough. Any product must offer real performance and value to earn repeat customers.

When Magic Sliders hit the U.S. market in the early 1990s, this unique product was already popular in Europe. But Americans were new to the concept of sliding furniture across the floor with the aid of Teflon-like discs. The discs, which are available in various shapes and sizes, attach to sofa legs or the bases of entertainment cabinets and other types of furnishings. So the first hurdle faced by the manufacturer was just getting people to try the product and discover for themselves how well it actually worked.

Most people found it hard to believe that these little discs could move up to 3,200 lbs, but because they retailed for less than \$10, many consumers took the plunge and tried the product. The rest, as they say, is history. Not only do Magic Sliders perform as advertised, they solve a major household problem.

Homeowners need to move heavy furnishings when cleaning, painting or rearranging rooms, and they don't want to throw their backs out or scratch their floors doing it. People also slide lighter objects, like chairs, across floors, and items like lamps and ashtrays across tabletops—which suffer scratches as well. Fortunately, Magic Sliders work on any surface, including wood, vinyl and ceramic tiles and even carpeting.

Today, the biggest challenge for Magic Sliders is to stand out from the many imitation products eager to prey on this now-popular market niche. But while the retail marketplace can be fickle, consumers recognize a good product and will buy it on a repeat basis.

Letters from satisfied customers, like this one from Betsy Anderson of Peoria, Ill., still pour in to the company's headquarters: "Dear Magic Sliders – Usually a product that makes such bold claims often disappoints the consumer, but your product is wonderful! I put them on my furniture, and now moving them is a dream. I am currently outfitting every conceivable stick of furniture in my home with Magic Sliders."

And how is Magic Sliders facing up to its competition? Madi Ferencz, the company founder and president, insists she will not lower the quality of her product to compete with cheaper brands. "That would significantly effect the high satisfaction level Magic Sliders currently enjoys," she says. "We have become even more responsive to customer demands by creating additional sizes and shapes for different uses, and we continue to innovate, such as with our unique 'grip tip' that attaches without tape, nails or screws." Information on all of the different styles and their uses can be found on the company's Web site at www.magicsliders.com.

Will such consumer-friendly tactics help Magic Sliders maintain its strong retail base through another decade? It's a good bet. Savvy marketers know that what is good for the customer also makes the cash registers ring. **HP**