

Business

Generations of Expertise and Innovation: How the Slavin Family Turned Tradition Into KOUCH's Tech-Forward Future



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Howard Slavin's introduction to the furniture world was anything but ordinary. Fresh out of the army in 1971, he found himself in an interview at one of the leading American department stores. A chance remark about playing handball led to a game with the merchandising manager later that evening, and to his first job in the bedding department. "That game changed my life," Howard recalls. "I walked off the court with a job offer

career would take Howard through senior positions in both retail and wholesale, including leaders with some of the major names in the industry. By the late 1990s, he had moved his family through York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Florida, building an extensive résumé in upholstery, merchandising, and executive leadership. Today, at 78, Howard has no plans to slow down. "Living with my sons keeps me energized," he says. "It's the most rewarding chapter of my career."

The turning point came in 2006 when Howard's eldest son, Michael, sought a mentor. Trained in broadcast communications and working in TV and film, Michael felt stuck. "I realized the best mentor I could ask for was my father," Michael explains. Howard encouraged him to learn the industry from the ground up, which led Michael to spend seven months in China immersed in factory operations. "That experience was like earning a master's degree in manufacturing," Michael says. "I saw firsthand how products are built, and it gave me the foundation I needed."

Together, Howard and Michael launched RHM Sourcing and Design in 2015, focusing on contract furniture for hotels, student housing, and wholesale markets. But the pair soon spotted an opportunity that reshape their business. As streaming boomed and home entertainment became central to daily life, Michael

recognized a gap: furniture that seamlessly integrated high-quality surround sound systems. “People were spending thousands on televisions and entertainment centers but settling for basic soundbars,” he explains. “We thought, why not combine the two, furniture and immersive audio, in a way that’s stylish and affordable?”

In 2023, **KOUCH** was born. The brand name was a playful nod to Howard’s insistence that ‘sofas’ should never be called ‘couches.’ “My brother and I were corrected constantly growing up,” Michael says. “So when it came time to name the company, I said, let’s call it KOUCH, spelled with a K to make it our own.”

Michael spearheaded the development of a proprietary sound system that delivers quality digital audio from within the sofa itself. Unlike competitors, whose setups often require extra dongles and exposed wires, KOUCH products have simple connectivity and use ‘Kouch Konnect,’ a seamless integration that synchronizes multiple KOUCH pieces with a single smart device. “We made it so simple that my 78-year-old father can use it; it’s ‘Howard-proof,’” Michael says. “If he can set it up, anyone can.”

The soft launch at a furniture market in August 2024 confirmed their instincts. In just 24 hours, KOUCH generated a huge number of orders. “That told us we had something real,” Michael notes.

The final piece of the family trio came with Robbie, the youngest son. Initially building a career in entertainment marketing and talent representation, Robbie didn’t expect to enter furniture. But when he turned 40 and bought a 65-inch TV, he realized his soundbar was not delivering. After experiencing KOUCH’s prototype, he was sold. “I was blown away,” he recalls. “It was not just furniture; it was a game-changer. I knew I had to be part of it.”

Robbie now leads brand development, using his background in influencer marketing and sales psychology to establish KOUCH as more than just a manufacturer. “In this industry, wholesalers rarely focus on brand identity,” he explains. “We want KOUCH to stand out on the showroom floor with digestible, memorable marketing that consumers connect with immediately.”

Howard provides merchandising expertise, Michael drives product innovation, and Robbie shapes brand strategy. Together, they represent three generations of skills converging into one company. “Our strengths complement each other,” Howard reflects. “Michael’s leadership and tech vision, Robbie’s marketing insight, and my years in merchandising, it’s the perfect balance.”

For Michael, the real achievement lies in modernizing an industry that has not changed much in decades. “Other than power recliners, nothing new has been introduced in 20 years,” he says. “We are proud that furniture can be stylish, comfortable, and deliver a true cinematic experience.”

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