

DAILY NEWS

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Best Places to live in NY

JASON SHEFTELL

Tui Lifestyle's Avenue collection can be delivered to you in three days



TUI LIFESTYLE

FULLY OUTFITTED

Tui Lifestyle founder Jason Atkins

Special Ops Marine looks to revolutionize furniture industry, and fast

When Jason Atkins takes you around the Greene St. SoHo showroom for Tui Lifestyle, the furnishings company he founded two years ago, he doesn't walk, he runs. He doesn't speak, he passionately explains why he's going to revolutionize the way Americans live and how he's going to change the way the world buys furniture.

"We are the first company to make furniture an impulse buy," says Atkins. "This industry has been nickel-and-diming customers for the past 50 years. They make you wait six weeks, eight weeks, three months for what you buy, and they spend your time and your money to make it happen and hold you hostage until the stuff arrives.

They take no risk and they overcharge for everything because their overhead and costs are so high. We're going to reinvent how people buy furniture. For one price, we can furnish your entire apartment in three days. Delivered and installed of the highest quality, and you choose how you want it to look."

Most of the time, these kinds of grand statements seem like pipe dreams. But once you see and hear Atkins and Tui Lifestyle in action, it's easy to see why it works. With more than 12 furniture collections starting at \$10,000 for fully furnished one-bedroom homes (or bigger) and turnkey packages that include Frette sheets, artwork, porcelain accessories and china, Tui Lifestyle can deliver a fully outfitted home any-

where in the U.S. within 72 hours.

"Day one you buy, day two we work out all the location and property logistics, and day three guys in white gloves wearing cologne deliver and install every piece of furnishing you ordered," Atkins says. "That's the Tui Lifestyle experience. One of our biggest obstacles is people don't believe it can be done. Believe me, it can."

You don't have to ask Atkins. You can ask customers, real estate marketers and developers (see next page). He has already done it more than 500 times, and in the process he has helped new condo projects in New York, Miami and other American cities elevate prices on unsold units and attract buy-

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A studio at FIDI's 20 Pine, where Tui outfitted several model homes



TUI'S RAY OF SUNSHINE



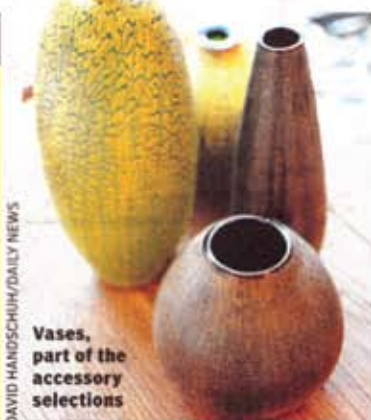
Locally, Tui Lifestyle has already had an impact on real-estate prices. According to Louise Sunshine, founder of the Sunshine Group and credited as inventing the modern method of selling and marketing global luxury condominiums, Tui is a tool that all developers and smart real-estate professionals should use.

Sunshine (below) recently conducted an experiment to prove the point. She purchased two apartments at the Setai, a luxury condo downtown. She bought two one-bedrooms, then fully outfitted each with Tui, working with designer Ernest de la Torre to curate the space with art and vintage pieces, and put them up for sale.

Immediately, both rented at higher prices than the building average. Since then, Sunshine has received offers to buy the apartments at square-foot prices reaching as high as \$1,300, a good \$400 higher than similar-size apartments in the same building and neighborhood.

"Tui is simply the best way to increase value in new condominiums," she says. "In Miami, their furniture ignited the market and drove prices up. It works here, too."

PHOTOS BY JEFF BACHNER



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Vases, part of the accessory selections

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ers who want a homebuying experience made easy. In Icon Brickell and the Marquis Miami, Tui Lifestyle completed hundreds of apartments, including full floors of model homes that condominium buyers wanted to replicate upon purchasing at the property. While previous models cost developers \$100,000 to \$300,000, purchasing a Tui package cost them as little as \$12,000.

"Developers can furnish an entire floor of models for the price they were spending on one," says Atkins. "They love us, customers love us, and decorators don't know what to think of us. As long as our clients are happy, I'm good."

Clients are. So far Jennifer Lopez, Francis Ford Coppola and Derek Jeter have bought full-home packages from Tui. Stephen Sadove, CEO of Saks Fifth Avenue, and his wife purchased a Tui package to furnish their Miami home. Sadove was impressed with the design quality and Tui's efficiency.

"Beautiful, fantastic and stunning," says Sadove. "It's the perfect foundation to furnish the home. Our experience was exceptional."

Atkins, an entrepreneur who founded and sold two companies in the past 15 years, has a habit of changing, creating and altering industries. He finds what he calls



"holes" in business sectors that are backward, not innovative, and stuck in the past. His method of checks and balances, keeping tabs on each step of the delivery and sales process and measuring employee performance is just the beginning of how his organizations improve efficiency and update business models.

By selling directly to real estate developers and establishing "authorized dealers" in important cities in North America (already the company has dealers and stores in New York, Toronto, Miami, Atlanta and Scottsdale, Ariz.), he can attack the market at a larger scale for higher sales revenue than selling single packages to consumers. His authorized dealers are usually developers who want exclusives on selling and using the product in their local market, interior decorators drawn to the esthetic and convenience, or entrepreneurs who believe in

Tui's potential. To get started, dealers need a retail space and must purchase collections to show to their customers.

"I couldn't care less if anyone buys anything from our retail stores," says Atkins. "I want developers, hotel owners, condo buyers to see this in a building's model and want to buy it. We're not selling furniture, we're selling solutions. When I sold my second company, I was driving around South Florida and I saw all these cranes going up and half-built buildings and I said they are in big trouble. How are they going to move all these new homes? Two years before, I had bought a home and it took me a year, one full year, before I had the thing fully done. The idea kind of just hit me."

Tui Lifestyle is already profitable. The company has no debt, no bank loans and manufactures all its own furnishings. They come out with new collections



Francis Ford Coppola

Jennifer Lopez

Derek Jeter

EPH. GETTY (2)



The Riviera living room, part of a full collection priced at \$18,995



Above, Signature collection metal and leather dining set pairs well with wooden bookcases. Left, the exterior of the Greene St. showroom in SoHo, where most collections are on display



PHOTOS COURTESY TUI LIFESTYLE

every few months, and can tailor collections for specific buildings or cities. The Metropolitan collection is black, sleek and modular. It was designed for New York. The Marquis, designed for a Miami condominium owned by New York-based Africa-Israel, has elements of browns, creams, leather and suede. It combines steel frame chairs with benches and glass side tables. Tui even delivers lamps, vases, accent pillows and mirrors. They use Italian leathers in certain collections, and take ideas from global design trends and classical pieces.

Atkins is a newcomer to the design world, which is why he brings a fresh take. He's not tied to tradition or playing by old rules that don't benefit the customer. His personal story is as compelling, radical and charged as his company.

Jason Atkins is a former Special Operations Marine trained to do recon missions and chase terrorists around the unfree world. His father, who brought him

up, is a barber in inner-city Philadelphia. Atkins joined the Marines immediately after graduating high school. He performed so well in basic training, he was asked to try out for Special Operations. He rose to the first of his class there, as well, training in cold weather and urban areas, as a wheel man and ultimately as a sniper. His main role was to enter Afghanistan, Somalia and Haiti to provide intelligence to the U.S. military. In most cases, he didn't even wear dog tags.

"No one was supposed to know we were there," he says. "I never had to kill anyone, which is what kept me sane."

After the military, Atkins worked for an investigative company in the U.S. looking into insurance claims and corporate fraud. He then started his own company, headquartered in Orlando, which became the largest of its kind in the Southeast. After selling that company,

he created a medical transportation company that chauffeured people to and from doctors and rehabilitation.

"I was seeing all of these claims being paid to people getting into accidents driving home doped up or injured or from their doctor," he says. "So I went to insurance companies and told them they could save millions by getting people to and from these medical facilities as opposed to paying them when they get into an accident. Now it's a multibillion industry."

Atkins laughs when he says he's in the interior design business. Likable, intensely intelligent and highly believable, he's promoting the idea of a better life for himself and everyone else.

"I grew up with nothing," he says. "I never traveled till I was 19 when I went to Paris as a Marine. When the boat landed all the guys went to the first bar off the boat. I took a bus into the city and walked around from 6 a.m. till midnight. I loved the architecture and the streets.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

WHAT: Tui Lifestyle, tuilifestyle.com

WHERE: 136 Greene St., SoHo

WHY: Select, buy and receive complete home furnishings for as little as \$10,000. Choose from more than 10 collections and premium packages. Add accessories, turnkey packages that include sheets, and additional rooms.

WHAT: All pieces delivered and installed within 72 hours.

I was immediately attracted to beautiful things. Most Americans are like me. I didn't know how to make a home. I think what I'm doing could change the furniture industry. I think this can help people live better, with more style. Everything should be as easy as Tui Lifestyle."