

## Rite Rug is on the right track

### Company invests \$100,000 in renovations at Chillicothe store

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While many companies — and municipalities — are cutting budgets during the economic downturn, one Columbus-based company is going the other way.

Rite Rug has invested more than \$1 million renovating its stores, including a \$100,000 renovation in Chillicothe that was completed last November.

The approach seems to have worked, as the company's sales are expected to top \$50 million this year, up 25 percent from last year, according to Sales Vice President Larry Noel. He said Chillicothe's store sales are expected to increase 20 percent from last year, but declined to disclose individual store sales numbers.

"We've made an investment in Chillicothe when other people are closing their doors," he said.

Noel said the store was successful partly because of a shift of focus of consumers. He said they are more interested in beautifying their homes, especially after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and stock market plummet.

"Invest in what you know," he said. "Your home is something you never lose money on."

Store Manager Steve Hemphill agreed. "I think homeowners are looking for affordable ways to increase the value of their homes and Rite Rug gives them those options."

The store's success could be part of a larger trend, as retail sales rose throughout the country, according to the U.S. Commerce Department. Furniture sales rose 1.7 percent after falling in July.

Noel, however, said Rite Rug is offering something special.

"We want to educate you and make sure you feel truly good about your investment," he said about the company's personal service.

He also said the company makes money because it does its own installing and financing, and because it offers discount remnant carpeting, which is the carpet at the end of a roll.

Hemphill said changes in store management have also helped focus the company.

Noel said features like carpet consumer ratings, products like laminates and exceptional customer service will make the company a fixture in Chillicothe for years.

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