

WENDT INDUSTRIES HAS THE NEED FOR SPEED

By Matt Warnock

Wood & Wood Products' new column, "Best Practices," features targeted interviews with production managers offering tips and solutions that have helped increase productivity, improve profitability and enhanced quality at their company. For information on being included in a future "Best Practices," email Associate Editors Matt Warnock at mwarnock@vancepublishing.com or Wade Vonasek at wvonasek@vancepublishing.com.



Tim Donowick, executive vice president, Wendt Industries Inc.

Wendt Industries Inc., based in Tracy, CA, is more than just a manufacturer of cabinets and casegoods; it is also a distributor and a contractor. The company, which caters to the sports facilities market, was founded in 1994 and employs approximately 20 people in its 45,000-square-foot shop.

Tim Donowick, executive vice president, of manufacturing and engineering, has been with the company for a little more than two years, but already has made some significant improvements to Wendt Industries' production process.

Donowick says that "by simply focusing on velocity through our shop, using some bits of lean manufacturing and other things that were in vogue over the years," he has made improved the rate at which jobs make their way through the shop,

while maintaining quality and improving customer satisfaction. Donowick is constantly challenging the company's capabilities to find and correct shortfalls, while trying to find the shortest route from start to finish. According to Donowick, the company has practically doubled the speed in which orders now go through the shop.

"When I got here, we were some 18 weeks delinquent on 54 orders. Now we are zero delinquent," he adds.

The company's products typically fall under what Donowick calls "mass customization," where customers choose the options they want from an adjusted base standard. However, the company will produce fully custom pieces as well.

Because of this, Donowick recognizes the need to be flexible and the ability to find creative solutions to the problems of production. "Sometimes it takes a little bit of imagination — a little bit of MacGyverism — to do a job that you've never done before," he says.

Donowick, who began his career in the woodworking industry in 1971, has learned to recognize what companies do right and what they do wrong, and incorporates those lessons into his role at Wendt Industries.

"Because I've been at a number of different companies, I have the opportunity to pick the best processes from each," he explains. "I'll take a little bit of what Kimball did well, what Sanyo did well, what Canyon Creek did well. I take the successes and failures, put them all together, and come up with what I think is the best way to run a business." ☞