



Robert Schultz, from left, Tom Lott and Jason McGuire look at blueprints in the drafting and engineering department, which comprises three draftspersons and is located in an island in the middle of the office.

Creating a high-value millwork business



CBR's work includes residential, large projects such as this entertainment center. "We're looking for customers who ask how nice we can make it, not how we can make it cheaper," says Robert Schultz.

plant facts

CBR

Riverside, N.J.

Employees: 24

Annual sales: \$2.3 million

Plant area: 30,000 square feet

Product: Custom millwork, entertainment centers, reception desks, school millwork

CBR Woodworking identifies customers who value higher quality, and uses networking, standard practices and employee communication to improve efficiency.

by Karl D. Forth
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Robert Schultz's goal of creating higher end millwork starts with identifying customers who value quality.

"We're looking for customers who ask how nice we can make it, not how we can make it cheaper," he says.

Schultz is president of CBR Woodworking LLC, which has moved from all residential work to primarily commercial work. He also plans to expand CBR's sales area from the

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networking

Philadelphia area to New York and northern New Jersey.

Schultz began as a maker of furniture in a custom shop, but after nine years, he wanted to grow beyond the limits of a small shop. Today, CBR deals primarily with designers, architects and general contractors, achieving \$2.3 million in sales in 2004. The company started out

2005 with a \$2 million backlog.

CBR is seeking the higher quality work that takes advantage of what he sees as the company's strength: attention to detail.

From bid to design

CBR's 30,000-square-foot shop is in an old textile mill building in Riverside, N.J., near Philadelphia. Work areas for the 24 employees in the building are broken up into a series of smaller rooms, connected by stairs, corridors and doorways.

CBR's process starts with sales and estimating. Four to six jobs are bid each week. Jobs then go to the project management department and to the drafting and engineering department, which comprises three draftspeople/detailers and one programmer and is located in an island in the middle of the office. Projects are drawn in AutoCAD, sent to the architect and returned for corrections, then sent out to the shop to be built.

Schultz says that Microvellum works within their system because it allows a user to send AutoCAD drawings to the architect, and to send data directly to the router. CBR needs a full-time person in its purchasing department because of the wide variety of materials required for its custom work.

The company has 10 to 15 jobs in

On the network

Schultz is a big believer in networking — even if there isn't an immediate order.

"The organizations I belong to more than likely wouldn't bring me business, but I'm able to bring a vision back to the company, so we can look at what other companies are doing.

"My feeling is that rubbing elbows with others in the construction industry helps me determine what I should and shouldn't do."

Schultz gives the example of a person in the steel business who does no low-bid work at all. Meeting this person at an event inspired Schultz not to low bid every job.



CBR switched to dowel construction, so a new Tritec Gannomat Index 125 FS dowel inserter was added. There are 10 to 15 jobs in the shop at any one time.

the shop at any one time, including reception desks, millwork for schools and large entertainment centers. CBR also does a lot of subcontracting work.

Online and offline

CBR defines jobs as either being online or offline projects. Offline projects are drawn in AutoCAD on the computer, but delivered to a designated person who builds the whole job in a separate area of the building. Online projects are drawn on the computer, with data downloaded to the machines using Microvellum. Schultz's goal is to do as much work as possible online.

CBR has added central operational software for management of jobs and

personnel. New ProjectPak/ShopPak estimating software from TradeSoft allows a person to punch in a job in one of the "time" stations located in different areas of the shop, and receive real-time information on any project.

A Holz-Her 1265 Super Cut vertical saw cuts panels. A Komo VR 510 Mach One S router bores and cuts in nesting

applications. CBR switched to dowel construction, so it added a new Tritec Gannomat Index 125 FS dowel inserter. It also uses a Brandt edgebander, Gannomat Model 260 case clamp, SCMI Hydro 3200 saw and Altendorf F45 sliding table saw in panel processing.

A Weinig Quattromat 23P moulder,

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"I can't tell you how many tidbits of information I picked up that helped us. Many things aren't related to woodworking."

CBR was represented at a Philadelphia awards dinner for the Assn. of Builders and Contractors, a national organization of commercial builders. CBR produced millwork for three award-winning projects: an association office, college performing arts center and corporate headquarters.

Schultz adds that membership in the Architectural Woodwork Institute has been particularly helpful. "People come looking for us because of AWI," he says.

Robert Schultz's observations:

- People who perfect the process should be rewarded.
- The industry undersells itself.
- Companies should work for profit, not wages.
- This is an industry where there aren't a lot of standards, but AWI is setting standards.

Powermatic jointer and Butfering Super widebelt sander process solid wood parts in the mill room. Schultz plans to add a new beam saw, and he says future machines purchased will be driven by computer, using Microvellum.



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Colors can be mixed from scratch in the finish shop, with varnishes, stains and glazes applied. A separate area handles final assembly.

Year of education

CBR has a planning meeting among management staff every Friday, and a 7:00 a.m. Monday meeting that summarizes what will be done that week. Schultz says this format came about because there were too many

meetings about individual things.

"Communication is the key," he says. "People know what they're supposed to do and know what's coming. They're informed."

As part of what Schultz called the year of education, CBR sent 12 people to IWF, which he says was a great bonding experience.

"The biggest thing last year was the show. I can't say enough about that," he

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A Komo router is used for panels that require both cutting and routing. A separate vertical panel saw does cutting only.

says. "They learned so much going to IWF. If I didn't call 2004 the year of education, we wouldn't have gone as a group."

Schultz says it was a big deal for someone in the shop to go to the show. "We went as one group, went out to dinner a couple of nights and had a good time. Before we went, we gave everyone an assignment, to look at the beam saws, for example."

For CBR, Schultz says 2005 will be the year of lean thinking and lean

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Solid wood parts are processed in the mill room with a Weinig Quattromat 23P moulder, seen here, a Powermatic jointer and Butfering Super widebelt sander.

manufacturing.

"I'd like to learn more about lean manufacturing and using cells," he says. "We want to increase the time

Setting standards

Robert Schultz, president of CBR Woodworking LLC, emphasizes the need for Standardized Operating Procedures throughout the shop and the company, and sees this as a huge ongoing task. He coordinates this effort himself, including a one-hour standards meeting every Monday afternoon.

"SOP's should be established throughout the building, and we're working on that," he says. "We need to define how we make our doors, glass shelves, what are our standard procedures for setting up our drawings and how do our pages look? How do jobs run through drafting and what

measurements do we need?

"It's basic stuff that needs to be solidified — and preached. It's the way a job is handed from one function to another. Every department should be working on SOPs, also construction and drafting standards."

All of this helps CBR increase efficiency, because all work is custom. Schultz found it was better to have a smaller number of people, just department heads, to set standards, then tell everyone else about those standards.

employees spend in value-added activities, and work more on how the shop is set up and developing cells."

Schultz says that 2005 also will be a year of organization, including getting new computer and software equipment that will allow the company to deal with the market more competitively.

"We're clearly in the custom business, and we can turn on a dime," he says. "We want to be among the best. To do that we have to price right, we have to have a quality product and an on-time delivery schedule. With those three ingredients you can do anything in this business." ▲