

In terms of efficiency, solid wood machining always has been one of Madsen's bigger challenges. The most complicated molding profiles, for instance, needed to be outsourced, leaving Madsen at the mercy of another shop's schedule.

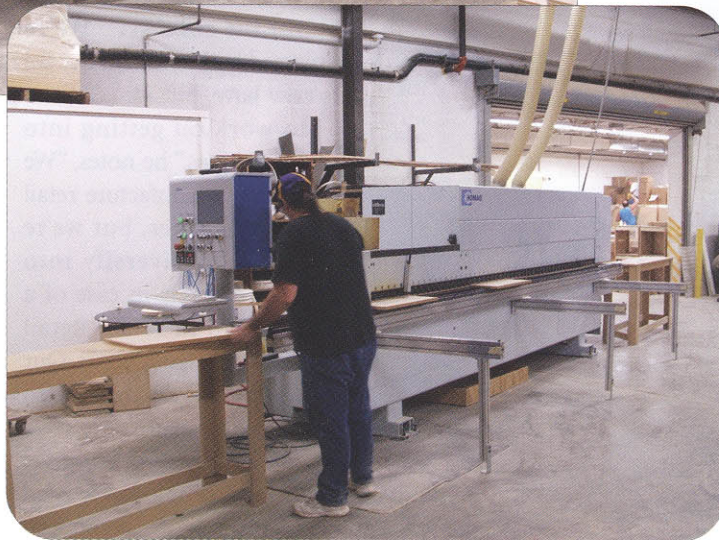
The purchase of the Kentwood moulder changed all that. "Getting this new Kentwood moulder will be a big thing for us," says Trippe. "Now we will be in control."

"Another area we are upgrading is the finishing department. We've added a fourth spray booth and a line finisher. The important thing is getting projects through the system efficiently, allowing each department adequate time to complete its portion of the project."

Another recent purchase has been a wood scrap grinder from Weima to grind all of Madsen's wood waste. "That's going to be a real money saver for us," says Trippe. "Instead of paying to get rid of all our waste, we're selling our sawdust for fuel now. It should save us a substantial amount of money each month. The grinder is equipped with a system that is tied directly into the shop's dust collection, and it's all blown into the back of semi-trailers."

### Having the right people

Madsen is doing a lot of custom work right now particularly in airports, restaurants, bars and magazine shops. Trippe believes the challenge in custom work is to have the right people. "Our employees continue to be our biggest asset," he says. "For our cus-



tom work, we feel very fortunate to have some of the top cabinetmakers in this area. We also have younger employees who are learning to do custom work by working alongside our journeymen cabinetmakers. I've worked in quite a few different shops over the years and I know what a lot of the issues are that make employees unhappy. One of our goals in starting this business was to address those issues. We have not had a problem getting people and always have a lot of applications because of our reputation for the way we treat employees. Now we not only have a great reputation for quality and service, but we are known for having an exceptional work environment. We take care of our people by doing a

lot of little things that maybe other companies don't do. We're very family oriented – if someone needs to see his child's third grade play, for instance, he's able to go. Madsen's crew is highly motivated and when new employees start work, they can see that and it becomes contagious.

"We do a lot of cross training, especially in our machining, so that we can run split shifts and get more hours on our computerized machines. We've been fortunate to have people come in that have previous experience with our equipment, which has allowed us to accelerate our cross training program."

Trippe believes his company has a good system for bidding a project while

conceding that bidding is one of the toughest challenges due to all the competition out there. "I guess that's where our reputation comes through," he says. "Most shops can do a pretty good job quality wise and be pretty competitively priced, but it's the service after the sale that counts. We try to do a lot of the extra that make our customers' jobs easier. Once it leaves our door we're not done with it. We continue to stand behind our work." **MW**



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