



**A** LOT OF COMPANIES BUILD CABINETS. MANY BUILD great cabinets. Some build cabinets with the purpose of making a difference in people's lives. One of those companies is Decor Cabinets.

"Building cabinets is not rocket science," says President Larry Dyck. "A lot of people do a great job, but the purpose of our company is to build cabinets in a way that impacts not only our local community but the world. Cabinets are what we do, but we are built around the concept of building community. Our purpose is to make this world a better place, not just to build cabinets. Cabinet manufacturing is our way of enabling us to reach out."

That's a strong statement to make, especially in the cut-throat world of business. But Decor Cabinets firmly believes in this business philosophy, and its employees make these goals possible. A multi-cultural company with 360 employees hailing from 12 different countries, Decor Cabinets is involved in a lot of community events, on both a local and international level, and supports organizations that help people.

#### THE START OF SUCCESS

In 1977 Dyck sold his shares in another company that produced kitchen cabinets and then established Decor Cabinets with several family members. They began producing face framed cabinets in a two-car garage outside of Winnipeg, Canada, but within a few months, moved the company to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. The company remained in that facility for the next 12 years.



HELPING THE WORLD ONE CABINET AT A TIME IS THE GOAL AT DECOR CABINETS. JANICE GABLE BASHMAN TELLS HOW ONE CUSTOM CABINETRY COMPANY IS WORKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES.

# CABINETS WITH A PURPOSE

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Pictured: A high level of skill and expertise goes into making cabinets at Decor Cabinets.

Due to customer demand, the company shifted its focus in 1985 to high quality custom frameless products with full access cabinetry. At that time, it was a big change for Decor's 30 employees. The company produced framed and frameless products for the next year and then moved exclusively into frameless production. This shift triggered a growth surge, and in 1990 Decor moved to its current 160,000-square-foot location in Morden, Manitoba.

In 1994, Decor contracted with representatives in the United States and began marketing outside of Canada. "This opened up new markets and allowed the company to move forward significantly," says Dyck. "We also invested in a lot of computer technology, programs and CNC technology [computer numerically controlled equipment] in the late 1980s, when this technology was relatively new. This technology enabled us to read and scan bar codes for drill purposes when it was just being introduced to the market giving us a competitive edge."

Today, Decor Cabinets manufactures medium- to high-end custom products and is owned by Dyck, his brother Abe, and Vice President of Sales and Marketing Stan Pauls. Seventy percent of its products are sold in the United States, with the remaining 30 percent in Canada. Its dealer network includes four Canadian provinces and 17 U.S. states. "We have a very good dealer base that is focusing on new housing and the remodel market for medium to higher level houses," says Dyck.





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### CUSTOMER REQUIREMENTS DRIVE PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Decor's cabinet styles range from traditional to modern and can be constructed from 11 types of wood with over 90 different finishes. "Cherry and maple woods are the buyers' most popular choices," says Dyck. "But styles run the gamut, and trends are shifting toward a more contemporary look utilizing glass and stainless steel. No matter the customer's preference or sizing needs, Decor Cabinets utilizes "the newest technologies in wood finishes, the latest trends in kitchen design and the highest quality materials and hardware to manufacture cabinets to meet its customers' requirements," says Dyck.

Because Decor is a small company, it can rapidly respond to new trends and make changes to products in order to meet customer demand. In the past year, Decor has introduced a significant number of new colors and materials. Decor also unveiled contemporary products utilizing Exotic Veneers and Melamines with the grain running horizontally. "We try to stay in touch with where the market is going and develop our products internally to meet the market," says Dyck.

### ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY

Methods to save the environment are on most people's minds these days. Decor Cabinets has risen to meet this challenge by becoming certified by the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association (KCMA) in their Environmental Stewardship Program (ESP), which requires compliance in air quality, product resource management, process resource management, environmental stewardship and community relations.

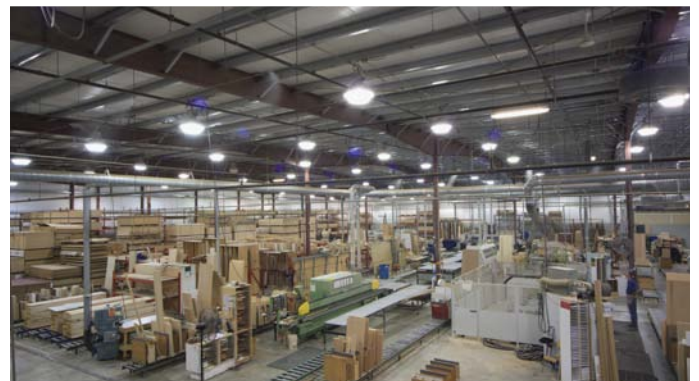
In addition, Decor offers eco-friendly "engineered wood products such as cabinets manufactured with exotic veneers that will support the sustainability of the forests," says Dyck. This material is produced through the manipulating of common wood fiber through computer design and technology.

### CHALLENGES TO GROWTH

Averaging 20 percent growth for the past five years, Decor finds itself with a challenge – to find enough people to fill its jobs. Decor is the largest employer in a small community of approximately 7,000 people, and the smaller pool of potential employees has made it more difficult for the company to grow. As a result, Decor instituted a half-dozen different initiatives focused on retention and employment in the community. It recently received an innovation award from the Woodworking Manufacturing Council for locating and bringing employees into its community. "One of the things we did was to recruit immigrants out of Winnipeg," says Dyck. "We told them about our community, brought them to our facility for a tour, hired a number of them, and then moved them to Morden, helping some of them with settlement issues."

Despite this challenge, Decor sees a healthy future for itself. It focuses its efforts on increasing the throughput of the organization not just on controlling costs. "The full implementation of the TOC [Theory of Constraints] has been the biggest impact on our production environment over the past three years," says Dyck.

Decor also invested in equipment to enable nested based machining and works with lean manufacturing to increase productivity. A new compensation program has also been implemented focusing on productivity and work habits that would deter-



Pictured: Specialty and finishing departments create custom products and quality finishes.



Pictured: Outstanding custom cabinetry that is beautiful and functional.

mine the wage scale for employees based on meeting certain productivity criteria.

#### THE DECOR DIFFERENCE

The real Decor difference is its purpose, people, culture and products. Decor cultivates the energy and dedication growing within its walls to realize a higher purpose, improve the community and help its employees pursue success. Decor Cabinets is committed to being a place where people want to work, are able to contribute their best, where their skills and values are truly respected and

#### Enhancing the Beauty of Nature

The process of manipulating common wood fiber enables us to reproduce the natural appearance of nearly any species you desire. This environmentally responsible alternative produces lumber and architectural veneers that are defect free and consistent in color and grain, time and time again.



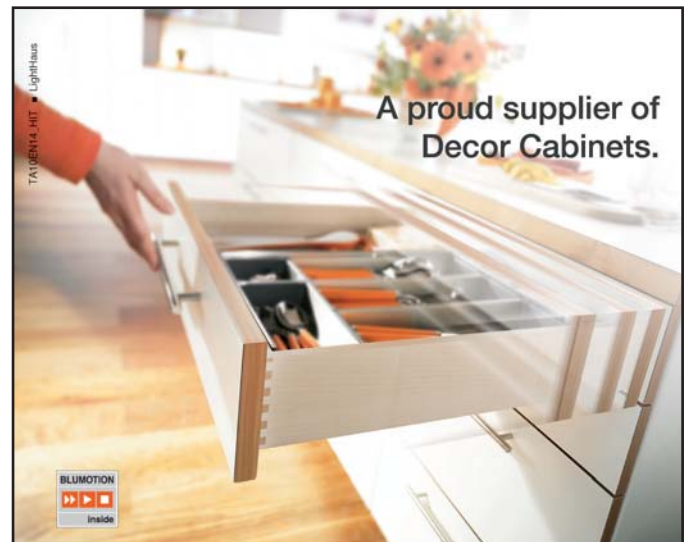
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where they can grow and excel. Though the people that work at Decor come from many different cultures and backgrounds, they are all members of one community. By nurturing sincere and meaningful relationships with its employees, Decor aspires to bring about positive change and give back to the community.

The difference in Decor's products is the excellent workmanship that shows the importance the company places on manufacturing something that consumers will be delighted to have in their home. One of the biggest things that makes Decor stand out from its competitors is its finishes. "We do some high quality finishes," says Dyck. "We look for a lot of clarity, depth and transparency in them to create the finest products. Cabinets are cabinets, and there are not a lot of things that can separate one manufacturer from another. Our finishes allow us to stand out from our competitors." Decor also offers personalized customer service; cabinet modifications at an affordable price; full top on base cabinets, which prevents racking on installation and keeps the cabinet square; and the majority of delivery in its own trucks rather than via a secondary carrier.

#### STANDING PROUD

Decor is proud to be a contributing member of the business community in Morden," says Dyck. "Morden has allowed us to prove that success in the North American marketplace can be achieved by a locally-owned company operating from a small town base." But what's most important to Decor Cabinets is that it has had impact on people's lives, not only in the community but around the world.



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