



*President's Column*

## Our Division-Naming Dilemma

By **Bob Mapes**, President

**How hard is it to name a division that accounts for 20% of your sales? The answer: it was dang tough!** The division I am referring to is our "Hardwood Components Division."

When we initiated our marketing strategy<sup>1</sup> three years ago, a main goal was to clearly identify who we are and what we do. With the help of our marketing team, we clearly defined that we had seven distinct divisions: Sawmills and Kilns, Lumber and Millwork, Hardwood Components, Architectural Wood Solutions,



*Yoder Lumber's Hardwood Components division*

Rolling Ridge Woods, Forestry, and Logistics.

The Hardwood Components division gave us naming fits from the very start! To me, naming a division that is responsible for more than 20% of your sales should be a fairly simple task for a talented group of marketing experts.<sup>2</sup> Boy, was I surprised by just how difficult that small project turned out to be.

Our marketing experts and an internal marketing team did a bang-up job of developing and presenting us with names and thoughts for this division. Some we considered were: Dimension Products; Hardwood Manufacturing; Hardwood Products; Dimension and Panel Manufacturing; and Glue-up Division. Every one of those names fell short of telling the marketing story about what the Hardwood Components division does and can do. Not to mention that geographic location has a lot to do with how we refer to the processes.

To better understand our quandary, allow me to describe what this division does and why we chose

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***"The demand of our customers is changing and we have to look for opportunities to be a part of that change"***

— *Mel Yoder, CEO*



*The WoodEye's automated scan system provides us a more consistent product.*

to name the division “Hardwood Components.” It’s not the sexy or catchy marketing name I had hoped we would create. I was looking for a name that would instantly resonate with our current and future customers.

Early on we had identified this division as an up-and-comer, so getting more diverse sales for it was critical. Over the last 24 months, we have made significant human and financial capital expenditures in order to successfully increase our production capacity, efficiencies, and throughput. Getting the marketing right for this division is important to us.

One of the primary products this division manufactures is precision ripped staves manufactured from select hardwoods. These staves can be used directly in furniture or other wood products and can best be described as pieces of hardwood that have been optically scanned for yield and then ripped to a precise width to create a glue edge. The staves are then processed through a high-tech scanning system<sup>3</sup> coupled to a high-speed Talon crosscut saw<sup>4</sup> to eliminate customer defined product ‘defects’ before they are cut to uniform lengths. Under most circumstances these precision staves will be further processed into glued-up wood panels or posts at our facility.

Most people in the business know what moulder blanks and S4S are, but now we get into trying to describe what constitutes a “panel” or a “post”.

In the hardwood industry a “panel” is manufactured by edge-gluing multiple staves together. They can be as small and simple as a 9-by-12 inch cutting board blank, a 5-by-20 inch drawer front, a 12-by-48 inch stair tread, a 30-by-48 inch table top, a 3-by-3-by-48 inch face-glued newel post part, 8-by-84 inch bed parts, or a 30-by-192 inch solid wood butcher block counter top. The finished thicknesses on the panels can range from five-eighths to two inches or more. Thicker products, like butcher blocks and posts, can be made by face-gluing the staves.

These panels and posts are manufactured on four of our glue clamps fed by an Opti-Match color scanner. This optical color and dimensional scanner ensures the staves produce a finished panel or post that meets the customer’s uniform color specifications with a minimum amount of waste.

These panels or posts can be shipped as they come out of the glue clamps or further manufactured by precision end trimming and running through our moulders and shapers to achieve the customers’ specified dimensions and edges. They can then be shipped to one of our many strategic partners for additional CNC work or a finish application.

To further complicate our naming process, this division also uses the same machinery and lean processes to manufacture custom flooring, mouldings, moulder blanks, S4S, and many other custom furniture parts.

Now you can start to understand how we became perplexed when searching for a name to perfectly explain the division’s capabilities and radiate with future customers from coast to coast. Everyone in the industry calls this manufacturing process something different. A lot of our panels become part of very sophisticated designs and applications developed by architects and interior designers for retail shops and restaurants. We need to be confident these two groups know who we are and what we can do for them.

A couple of the basic tenants of marketing are:  
1) Make what you do instantly recognizable by the

largest potential customer population as possible;  
2) Make it as easy as possible for this customer base to do business with you.

That's why we chose to name this important division Hardwood Components. We are situated among the largest concentration of hardwood furniture manufacturers and retailers in the nation, so the manufacturing of hardwood components is a vital part of our business. We are very accomplished at making it easy for our customers to do business with us. We pride ourselves on customer service and the superior quality of our products. Our current goal is to cultivate the instant recognition

of our product capabilities and to broadcast our message to potential customers coast to coast.

<sup>1</sup>GLTACC ... Partially funded by the Great Lakes Trade Adjustment Assistance Center [www.gltaac.org](http://www.gltaac.org)

<sup>2</sup>Many thanks to the Gianfagna Marketing Group for their many hours of assistance [www.gianfagnamarketing.com](http://www.gianfagnamarketing.com)

<sup>3</sup>Swedish manufactured WoodEye 5 scanning system [www.woodeye.se](http://www.woodeye.se)

<sup>4</sup>WoodEye optical scanner integrated with Talon optimized crosscut saw system manufactured by Eagle Machinery [www.eaglemachines.com](http://www.eaglemachines.com)

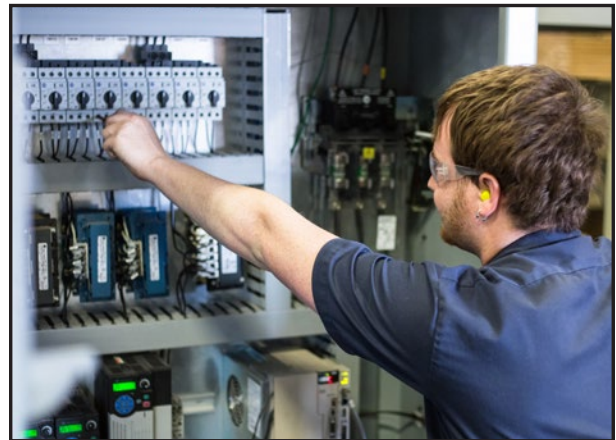


## The Millennial Mystery

By **Dennis Hange**, Marketing Manager

By the year 2020, Millennials will become key players in the world of professionals, comprising up to 40% of the workforce, according to the U.S Census data [1]. Employers and hiring managers must be prepared to understand their younger employees and their goals. A millennial can be described as someone born between 1982 and 2000, and, in America, they represent 83.1 million of the workforce and more than one quarter of our nation's population [2]. Millennials, also known as [Nexters](#), [Gen Y](#), or [Net Gen](#), are known for being connected, extremely tech-savvy, fun-loving, and open to change [3].

Over the past month, I had the opportunity to sit down and talk with four of Yoder Lumber's millennial employees to find out what they desire in a career and organization. Being a millennial myself and working closely with our



*Jonathan Regan adjusting sensors on the Talon Optimization Line*

Human Resources department for job openings and recruitment, I found this project intriguing to learn about our employees' past employment experiences and how they have landed at a career with Yoder Lumber. By closely listening to our employees, I was able to discover five related



characteristics of what I believe Millennials are looking for in an organization.

### **Technology and Freedom to Use It**

Millennials desire to use technology for continuous engagement with friends, family, and even co-workers. In the fall of 2015, our organization implemented an instant messaging system called [Slack](#) to assist with communication between divisions by creating peer to peer channels. Nexters are being progressive-minded in adapting faster to the use of technology. They grew up untethered with the constant use of technology thanks to wireless devices such as phones and tablets, and they remain connected with friends and family through text messaging, applications, and social media outlets. One of our employees, Daniel Shetler, shared his experience about using technology and a Mac computer on a day-to-day basis.

“At Yoder Lumber,” Shetler shared, “I use an Opti-Match machine which color sorts 95% of our material for glued-up panels. When using a technology like the Opti-Match, consistency is an important factor. The machine outdoes what 10 employees can do.”



*The Cameron Opti-match machine run by Daniel Shetler.*

### **Continuous Learning and Education**

Today, more and more young people are attending college with roughly 52% of twentysomethings acquiring either an associate or bachelor's degree.

[4] Millennials still need the skills to help develop them for future leadership positions. According to [Alexandra Levit](#) a speaker, writer, and consultant on generations in the workforce, “Companies that want to succeed in the future must invest now in getting them up to speed quickly.” [5]

Jonathan Regan, a Maintenance Technician at the Berlin division, shares about his experience taking additional college level classes offered through The Ohio State University (OSU) Agricultural Technical Institute (ATI) branch in Wooster, OH.

“This course was extremely valuable because I now make better decisions. We have looked at taking other courses in welding, hydraulic, and pneumatic that would help greatly on our day-to-day jobs.”

At Yoder Lumber, we have partnered for a three-year commitment with [Appalachian Partnership for Economic Growth](#) to provide continuous training for our future leaders through in-class instructions. In addition to our classes, supervisors arrange for cross training and rotational programs to learn about other career opportunities within each plant. At our Buckhorn plant, John Oren Miller has been employed with Yoder Lumber since the age of 15.

Miller stated, “I would not want to stack lumber my whole life. I wanted to start low and work my way up and stacked lumber for three years. Over the past year and half, I have been switching back and forth between the sawyer position at the resaw band mill cutting lumber and doing small maintenance jobs.”

### **Enjoyable Work Environment and Satisfaction**

Millennials are looking for a job and career they value, and at the end of week they want to know their employers value them for their hard work and dedication. From my research about Nexters and spending time with my coworkers, I have observed a connection across our organization. When comparing to previous generations such as the Baby Boomers, Millennials desire to write our own job description. Millennials have a deeper sense of satisfaction about the value they bring to

the company and hunger to have a greater sense of purpose in life.

Adam Ward, a Log Procurement and Forester, is based out of the Rolling Ridge Woods office in Parkersburg, WV. Adams works with log buyers to purchase quarter-sawn and veneer logs and also assists Ohio and West Virginia landowners with properly managing their forest and timber properties. Ward shared about the opportunity to do more than one task when determining who to work for.

“There were opportunities available for multiple roles at Rolling Ridge Woods,” Ward said. “There wasn’t just one specific job to do. If you wanted to do forestry or log buying, those options were on the table.”



*Adam Ward spraying wax on the ends of veneer logs, prior to an export shipment.*

### **Ability to Take Time Off – Work-Life Balance**

Our employees across seven business divisions work incredibly hard to provide a quality product and service to customers worldwide. Across three plants in Ohio and one log yard in West Virginia, employees labor an average of 47.5 hours per week. Millennials will admit they don’t even compare to the level of hard work environments when stacked up against previous generations.

“We are hardworking, but if you look back to the Builders generation (1915 to 1945), many had

more physically demanding jobs,” Shetler said.

Adapting to a new culture of work/life balance is important and can be an element necessary for hiring managers to consider. Shetler shared about having a work-life balance and vacation time to spend with friends and family.

“The amount of paid time off (PTO) is good, and if a guy wants a PTO day, the supervisors don’t complain about it. If you ask for the day off at Yoder Lumber, you get the day off.”

In the future, supervisors can benefit from being respectful and flexible with their workforce, allowing room in the workflow for employees to take time off for doctor’s appointments, personal commitments, and other family time that contributes to an improved work-life balance.

### **Coaching and Mentoring from Management and Experienced Professionals**

Organizations would also be wise to establish mentorship programs to help train and teach business strategies. I live by the motto, “Never stop learning; when you stop learning, you stop growing.” Millennials would learn skills from experienced peers about problem solving, open communication, taking risks, time management, and how to put their strengths to action.

Millennials are open to change and are willing to be coached and mentored. Jonathan Regan shared

his experience about how teamwork and learning from others makes his job more enjoyable.

“After working here for a period of time, I noticed the community aspect of the employees as a whole and as a team. I enjoy working alongside and learning from other staff.”

Corporate 500 companies like Ford, General Electric, and Ernest & Young are recruiting and investing in the next generation. Large corporations understand that the Baby Boomer generation are retiring quickly and therefore companies have well-

established leadership training programs in place to develop future leaders' transitions.

### The Key Takeaway

Millennials are becoming a critical influence of the future of any organization. Corporations across America are recognizing the benefit of investing in millennial talent. Within the next several years, they will be the generation to carry on the businesses, so why not invest now rather than later? Learning to adapt to their desires, differences in behaviors, and our growing technological changes could determine the success of any organization.

Will these requests be easy to push forward across a company that has existing programs? Is it a matter of simply changing the existing policies in an employee handbook? While adapting to the next generation

might mean accepting new challenges, the outcome promises significant rewards. Millennials present an undeniable opportunity for a positive change in the future. As corporations grow and evolve, company managers should take up the challenge to listen to their Millennials and create a welcoming, empowering culture for the Next Generation.

1. <https://www.td.org/Publications/Magazines/TD/TD-Archive/2013/05/Mastering-Millennial-Leadership-Development>
2. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-113.html>
3. <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf>
4. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/wanted-harvard-skilled-jobs-jeff-selingo>
5. <https://www.td.org/Publications/Magazines/TD/TD-Archive/2013/05/Mastering-Millennial-Leadership-Development>



## The Journey of Wood Werks Supply: “When One Door Closes, Another One Opens”

By **Danielle Scott**, Sales/Customer Service Department

**As humans, we can be good at routine and going through the motions without taking the time to enjoy our lives.** It isn't that we don't enjoy it; rather, the question becomes, are we doing something meaningful for ourselves? Perhaps something that builds relationships and has a positive impact on others' lives. We work to provide for food, health, and shelter for ourselves and our families because this is the responsible thing to do. But, isn't it possible to work for a living and enjoy it at the same time? Stop in to meet Ron Damon and his family, owners of [Wood Werks Supply in Columbus, Ohio](#), who have been living their dream now for more than 25 years.



*Wood Werks offers a diversity of product line to local woodworking hobbyist and professionals.*





*The showroom is designed to provide live demonstrations and seminars throughout the year.*

Growing up in a family of woodworkers, Ron became interested in woodworking at the young age of seven. He remembers those formative years of working alongside his uncle and grand-dad. Maintaining a career in the insurance business during the day, Ron spent his evenings doing what he loved, working in his woodshop. Ron and his wife Lee threw around the idea of starting up a woodworking store, but taking care of the family claimed top priority. In January of 1990, shortly after one career door closed in their lives, they decided to take to Ron's dream. The story pretty much unfolds from there. The motivation behind the growth of Wood Werks is not to be the next big thing; rather, the goal is to represent the concept of the "American dream," maintaining a solid company to offer quality products and services, and supporting the families of their employees.

Wood Werks Supply is a family business operated by

a team of woodworkers and focused on the woodworker, whether career or hobbyist. Wood Werks strives to supply its customers with the tools, machinery, service, and material to meet all woodworkers' needs. The incorporation of the [Rockler store](#) within its showroom makes it the ultimate woodworker's store. As many of the staff are woodworkers, there is a sense of relatability in the atmosphere that makes it evident they aren't just there to sell products but rather to assist customers in finding exactly what they need. Similar stores are often

laid out in branded sections; however, Ron feels it's more advantageous for customers to view products based on similarity for a comparative aspect.

During a recent tour of Wood Werks, Ron described his passion for the industry and how that passion has been passed on to his son, Todd Damon. He describes Todd as having the creative



*A variety of hardwood and exotic species are available to purchase in the store.*

mindset that has taken Wood Werks into the new age of machinery and contributed to their outside-the-box mentality. Todd's creativeness is present within the store's trimmings, from the construction of displays to the décor throughout the store. In fact, currently on display is one of Todd's in-process projects, a speed boat he has been working to replicate for more than a year.

As Wood Werks provides various products and services in the woodworking industry, [providing](#)

[lumber products is just one small piece of that puzzle.](#)

Yoder Lumber feels privileged to be a part of that dream and to build that relationship. Yoder Lumber looks forward to providing top-quality products and services as well as innovating other products to assist Wood Werks as they grow. A closed door and one dream inspired a man to create a business, career, and a lifetime of endless memories among woodworkers, as Wood Werks Supply has proved "when one door closes another one opens."



*Todd Damon shares a passion for woodworking by crafting his own wooden speed boat.*





## The Reclaimed Lumber Solution

By **Gregg Levin**, Architectural Wood Solutions Sales Representative

**In the world of architectural and commercial design, one of the hottest restaurant interior trends involves the re-purposing of recycled building materials,**

and it's difficult to miss the increased presence of reclaimed lumber. Reclaimed lumber is material that has been rescued from yesterday's factories, defunct warehouses, abandoned mills, and barns that are no longer in use. This trend started in the early 1980s as a modest attempt to creatively utilize materials that might have been destined for the local landfill or high school pep rally bonfire. Reclamation also revives hard-to-find woods like longleaf pine, once-common trees that produced mold- and insect-resistant lumber. Because of their slow growth, it's hard to find large quantities of longleaf pine without pulling it from old buildings.

Architects and designers have creatively developed visual schemes that take advantage of reclaimed materials' unique, aged character not found in new lumber products. Reclaimed lumber can be found in a broad spectrum of products including flooring, wall cladding, counter and table tops, and a limitless array of furniture and fixtures. The interesting visual character in reclaimed lumber is diverse, and mother nature has a

major role in creating the features designers find irresistible. From weathered, painted siding to old-growth, hand-hewn beams, to the staining of wood barrel staves which once pickled cucumbers are just some of the new recipes for creative restaurant interiors.

The process starts with the deconstruction of



*Reclaimed rafters sanded, sealed, and used as ceiling by Jeremy Levine Designs. [Photo used with permission](#) - [URL Link of Photo](#)*

*Yoder Lumber's millwork department has designed a new product line of wainscoting and flooring which is the spitting image of reclaimed lumber.*



an old wood-frame structure. Building components like flooring, beams, posts, and siding are all highly desirable reclaim elements. The salvaged materials are then scanned for metal content and put through the painstaking process of removing the metallic fasteners and architectural hardware. The next step is kiln drying to reduce the moisture content to an acceptable range for commercial millwork and rid the material of any

unwanted residents who have called this material their home.

Reclaimed lumber is not for the faint of heart. It often comes at two to three times the cost of new material because of its surge in popularity.

With increased demand comes increased prices. The process yields a product that carries a high cost driven by the significant labor required to produce it.

In addition, a buyer can't always know for sure what chemicals the reclaimed wood might carry or even be certain of its species.

Over the past two years, Yoder Lumber's millwork division has worked to develop a new material capable of answering the demand for the reclaimed lumber look. Yoder has developed circular sawn and brushed milling techniques along with custom stain and finish options that can be modified to any desired look. Now under its new banner, Yoder Lumber's Architectural Wood Solutions Division can deliver new materials, consistent in availability, specification, and finish to meet a great number of reclaimed lumber requirements at a competitive price.



## **WIP: Asset or Expense?**

*By Tony Yoder, Manager, Hardwood Components*

**Have you ever taken time to really think about your WIP inventory?** Most businesses are careful to count, tally, and otherwise track their in-process inventory, often primarily to prevent theft. Front office accountants preach the dangers of excess

WIP but cave to the production team's pleadings that it's a necessary evil. Of course, everyone knows that too much inventory is a bad thing, but most people can't really explain why that's the case or, more importantly, what to do to reduce it when it's gotten out of control.

I recently had the opportunity to travel to





*Paul Dow and Tony Yoder touring the Weinig plant in Germany.*

Germany and Italy to look at some cutting-edge woodworking equipment. The equipment was beautifully engineered, well manufactured, and most definitely not what anyone would call “cheap.” I noticed something interesting when looking at these machines; despite the fact that they were built to do a wide variety of different jobs, there seemed to be a common thread. These machines were not designed to produce large numbers of similar parts, they were designed to produce one part at a time. Setups were either very fast or non-existent and many steps that were formerly separate are now being joined together into a single step. Why would a manufacturer pay large amounts of money for a machine that produces only a small number of parts at a time?

The question we need to ask is this—is our WIP inventory working for us or against us? WIP takes up space; it often spoils; and, most importantly, it represents an investment that isn’t able to provide any returns in its current state. **At its core, WIP represents an expense, not an asset.**

Back in the 1950’s, a man named [John Little](#) created a mathematical equation that we now know as “[Little’s Law](#)”—a deceptively simple equation stating that a system’s inventory equals the amount of time it takes for that inventory to move through the system times the number of things input into the system. The equation is this-  $L$ , the average number of items in a system (average WIP) = the average number of items input into that system times the average amount of time each item is in that system.  $L \text{ (or WIP)} = \text{Arrival Rate} \times \text{Wait Time}$ .

Okay, equations are boring. But how does this one help us and what does it have to do with our material flow? As stated above, most businesses already know what their WIP inventory is. Also, most keep good records of how much material is being input into their systems. The consumption rate is obviously an important number to watch closely. Many businesses, though, don’t have a good handle on how long their WIP takes to be processed- the wait time or lead time. Knowing two of three of these numbers, we can now calculate what that is.  $\text{Wait Time} = \text{WIP} / \text{Arrival Rate}$ . For



*WIP inventory of lumber waiting to be placed into production.*



*Weinig's showroom facility in Tauberbischofsheim, Germany.*

example, a business that consumes 1,000 pieces of material per day and has an average WIP inventory of 30,000 pieces requires an average of 30 days to produce 1 unit.  $30,000 / 1,000 = 30$ .

I took some time to calculate our numbers for myself. After that, I spoke to the plant foreman and asked what he thought our lead time was. His answer was, not surprisingly, quite a bit lower than the 'lead' time I calculated. Why would this be? Either the foreman was wrong or my numbers, which I had checked and re-checked, were wrong. Neither seemed to be the case. We were promising lead times substantially lower than my calculated numbers, and we were making the deliveries. Continuing to look for answers, I took a look around the shop floor and found the solution. There were piles of unused material not actually destined for

orders. A large portion of our inventory was either "in hibernation" or "dead!" Our WIP investment was going to waste, sitting around without purpose.

To deal with our WIP problem, we have been trying to tighten down the reasons we allow ourselves to store material in WIP. All material needs to either be on order or have a reasonable expectation of being processed

within a month or two. Longer-term, we are looking at more ways to increase our material flow, creating lower wait times, and, subsequently, looking at Little's equation above to decrease WIP. I'm willing to admit we're not where we need to be yet, but our WIP level has improved substantially, dropping about 40% on average over the last two years.

Hopefully you've been inspired to evaluate your own WIP inventory. Too many businesses have accepted high WIP levels as a necessity and even think of it as an asset. The Lean thought process, though, tells us otherwise. We can improve our WIP levels and still function well. In fact, low WIP levels are one of the signs of good material flow through a process. Stay vigilant in your improvement efforts and you'll reap the rewards of a lower WIP inventory level.



**Yoder Lumber**  
*Quality is Our Tradition*

*The Branch of Success*