



Yoder Lumber
Quality is Our Tradition

The Branch of Success
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www.yoderlumber.com



By **Dennis Hange**
and **Danielle Scott**

Customer Highlight **Gordon Lumber** *Small Town Atmosphere, Friendly Customer Service*



From the blue prints of your home to mulching the flower bed, without a doubt Gordon Lumber can provide it. Yoder Lumber has had the privilege of working with Gordon for the past four years providing a variety of S4S products and hardwood lumber to their stores in Northwestern, OH. Yoder Lumber had the opportunity to sit down with Marc Lovins, Director of Purchasing, Rob Hofelich, Director of HR, and Jan Cunningham, Marketing

Director to learn about the history and diversity of customers for the building industry.

The establishment of Gordon started in 1868 with their first location in Oak Harbor, OH. Throughout the early 1900's, the company made an assortment of



Gordon Lumber's original store established in 1868.

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“The biggest learning opportunities are learned from your failures.”

*“Bob Mapes”
President and CEO*

“We are always looking to improve our efficiencies and become a more leaner organization.”

*“Trent Yoder”
Chief Operating Officer*



Gordon Lumber has an extensive fleet of more than 50 trucks for quick and convenient product delivery.

baskets through the Ottawa Basket Company. If you enjoy 100 year old whiskey, rums, or brandy you can thank Gordon for the craftsmanship of red oak barrels. At one point during the mid-1950's, Gordon had up to thirteen retail stores.

During the Mid 1960's, the company diversified their business and started building trusses and panel through their components division located in Findlay, OH. This division manufactures pre-assembled trusses for roofs and floors. Gordon's extended line of fleet includes fifty trucks for quick and timely shipping to job sites. Today, the company's headquarters are located in Fremont with six retail stores centrally located within 30 miles are Bellevue, Bowling Green, Genoa, Fremont, Huron, and Port Clinton.

One might ask how

does Gordon Lumber stand out in the crowded marketplace of big box stores? Gordon continues to make every customer who walks through the door their number one priority and provide unparalleled customer service. It's no wonder why customers continue to choose Gordon Lumber for their one-stop shop for all your construction



In 2016, Gordon received an award by Do It Best Corporation for being a top seller in the million-dollar selling club

and remodeling. The team of customer service staff has an extensive background in the construction industry, and all six location are in constant communication for resources and supplies.

Gordon has a harmonious business model of three different markets of contractor/builder (70%), do-it-yourselfer (20%) and local industries/factories (10%). Marc Lovins shared with us about the company being diversified with 70/30 blend between lumber and hardware. The Genoa, Fremont, and Port Clinton stores all expanded their business the past several years by offering a variety of items to rent for a few days to up to a month.



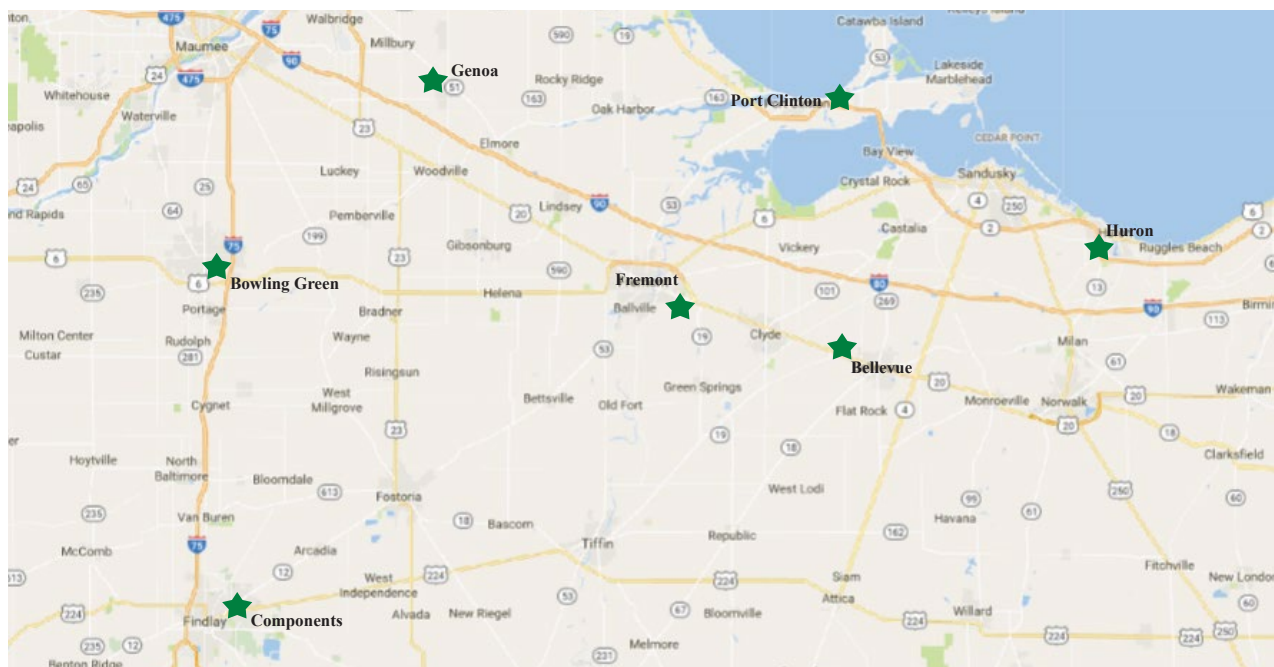
Rental items features a variety of equipment like this boom lift.

Rentals include garden equipment, construction and concrete tools, and heavy equipment like excavators, backhoes, trenchers, and boom lifts.

As the company has continued to grow to a multi-million dollar business, they shared the advancement of technology, and timely delivery has dramatically changed how they operate daily. As Gordon explores to additional retail stores in the future, the management team and owners desire are to find a location with the small town atmosphere. Despite the fact the history of Gordon Lumber has changed over the past 150 years, the company continues to stay true to their heritage of providing fair prices, quality merchandise, and honest customer service.



Gordon Lumber provides an extensive selection of top quality products.





Variability and Lean Manufacturing

By **Tony Yoder**, Chief Production Technology Officer (CPTO)

Have you ever gone to the grocery store and there was absolutely no one in line for the checkout when you went into the store, a long line magically forms the instant you begin moving towards the checkout counter?

This is a classic example of a principle called “variability” in the lean world, each customer took a different amount of time to browse for their goods. This creates a situation all the customers in the store could potentially go to the checkout counter simultaneously even though they may have entered the store in steady intervals.

Variability is defined as “a lack of consistency or pattern” or “liability to vary or change”. In business procedures, effects like fluctuations in task size and type, unreliable equipment, sick or unreliable workers, raw material and supply fluctuations, and many others can contribute to variability. Given the complexity of most processes, it’s not surprising that many of these factors multiplied can add up to a large amount of randomness.

What took 2 days to complete last week, might take 4 days to complete this week! Variability in time from one step of a transaction to another can result in backlogs. Within the process, priority



orders may end up waiting for parts while non-priority orders sail through. This makes accurate scheduling almost impossible and can result in serious customer service problems.

How can we deal with variability? First, we must realize that there is no way to eliminate variability in a process, we simply reduce it. Begin by discussing the topic with the people who perform the tasks. Ask them what causes them the most frustrating delays. It’s likely that the more you talk to them the more a pattern will emerge, with a handful of continuous root causes. If you can identify these root causes you can begin to attack those issues. Begin by looking at the progression steps and determine what is the bottleneck and use the “5 Whys” to help identify root causes.

Variability can also be mitigated by being flexible with your processes. If delays are inevitable at one step, try to make sure that the system is flexible enough to allow a task to move to another step

that isn't being delayed. Cross-train employees and make sure that bottlenecks and delayed steps get priority staffing. Combining steps as much as possible can also help reduce variability. This reduces the complexity and consequently reduces the potential impact of variability on that process. If necessary, expand your capacity at steps that are subject to high variability.



Next time you end up in a long line at a checkout counter, you may want to think about variability in your own business. Do you know what transactions have large variability? Do you know what the

causes of that variability are? Getting consistent, measurable results from your efforts from your processes can help prevent your products from ending up in line like you!



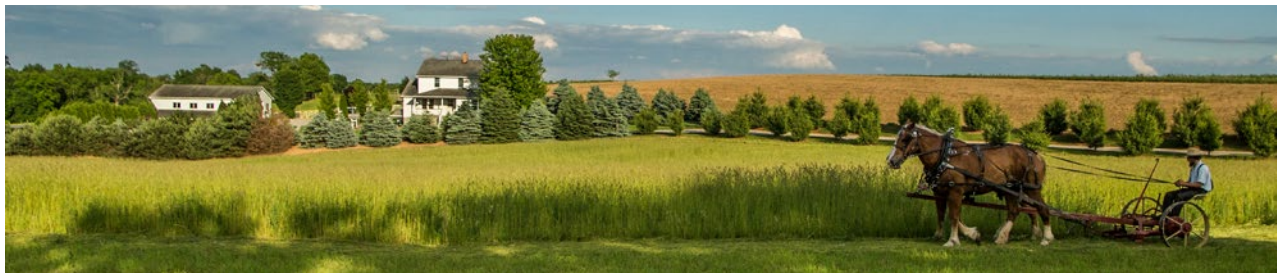
The Amish Work Ethic

By **Matthew Miller**, Designer and Consultant

Every year over 4 million tourists travel to Holmes County, Ohio to experience the unique lifestyle of the world's largest Amish community. To "outsiders" the lifestyle may seem simple, at times perhaps even a bit backward compared to today's modern lifestyle. As you drive the winding back roads of Holmes County, you're sure to end up following

a horse drawn buggy with a small child peering out the back window as the horse slowly clips around a corner or over the crest of a hill. The pace of life is slower for the Amish, yet it remains a diverse community filled with innovative and hardworking people, known for their exceptional skills in hand craftsmanship.

Historically the Amish and Mennonite communities survived by operating small family farms, but as cities grew and available farming land began to shrink, many were forced to look



for alternative ways to make a living. Small furniture and cabinet shops began popping-up as a way to add a bit of income on days where farm work wasn't possible. Soon the community began applying its building skills to the local construction marketplace, and crews of young, energetic Amish workers left their mark throughout the state of Ohio and beyond. With craftsmanship as the backbone, small wood shops have grown their businesses into well acknowledged manufacturers for the furniture and cabinetry industries.

Yoder Lumber is able to support these industries with high-quality Appalachian hardwoods as well as providing job opportunities for many from the Amish community. With a tradition of hard-work, dedication, honesty, and commitment to producing high-quality products, Yoder Lumber is ingrained with these same principals from the founder, John Yoder.

But where does the strong work ethic and passion for craftsmanship originate from? A local Amish pastor and local entrepreneur offered his thoughts on what creates this mindset.

Heritage: A Responsibility to family and community.

The slower pace of life is unhampered by the "convenience" — or as the Amish see it, distractions of modern-day life. Rather than becoming engrossed in the latest news or social media trends, they can focus on family and others in their community. From a young age, children are tasked with helping to complete a variety of tasks: young girls help with dishes, laundry, and the garden; while young boys help with lawn mowing, caring for animals, and working the fields. Many of these tasks need to be completed before they walk to the one-room, parochial school; the remaining tasks will be waiting when they arrive



back home. At the end of the day families gather for hearty, home cooked meals and discuss the days experiences. As the day ends, you will find families playing croquet on the front lawn, sitting in rockers on the porch, or playing board games by the glow of a gas light. It is not uncommon for three generations to live on a single homestead, often with grandma and grandpa living in a small home called a "Doddy Haus." This togetherness forms an incredible family bond, encouraging the mindset of "building for future generations, not building for today."

Faith: Practical application of teachings.

The Amish believe the Bible is the sovereign word of God, literal in meaning, and use the Bible as a guide for living. The Pastor shared, "with the view of eternal destiny there is a certain sense of preparedness." Taught from a young age, the Amish look to scripture to back this teaching, "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat" (English Standard Version, 2 Thess. 3:10). The scriptures also state that "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Eccl. 9:10). There is also a responsibility and moral requirement to give to fellow man the best and not a poor product. "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them" (Matt. 7:12).

The Amish heritage of family and faith really is inseparable, and both are key contributors in everything they do. Their work ethic permeates the culture of every company or community they are a part of. Yoder Lumber is grateful for each of our hardworking employees, whether Amish or not, and the conscientiousness they use serving our customers every workday!

Credits for 3 Amish photographs: [Denice Rovira Hazlett](#)