

Retail Fixture Firm Rodgers Wade Wins Wooden Globe for Technology

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A 160-year-old manufacturer that reinvented its plant for high-speed production took home the 2014 Wooden Globe for Commitment to Excellence through Technology, given by the Woodworking Machinery Industry Association.

Founded in 1856 as a furniture maker, Rodgers Wade is now part of Harrison, Harper & Walker, a construction services company. Both are based in Paris, TX, with Rodgers Wade providing fine fixtures and millwork for the retail, institutional and hospitality industries to its parent company, as well as store fixtures to national and global brands.

“We are a family-owned business,” says Darren Hamner, Director of Client Solutions. Hamner oversees engineering, estimating, purchasing and project management for the Rodgers Wade fixtures and millwork operations, and has been part of the Rodgers Wade team for more than 20 years

The company offers a unique combination of engineering and craftsmanship to complete an environment. “We are a single source provider from concept to completion. We import and export goods from all over the world, with clients in several countries,” Hamner says.

“We have had constant growth due to the commitment from our ownership, sales and entire staff,” he adds. “In the past five years we have averaged 100 percent growth each year due to these commitments.”

The company has 75 employees at the 275,000-square-foot plant.

Technology Aids Business

At Rodgers Wade, significant importance is placed on using advanced machinery to improve productivity. Hamner notes virtually all of the equipment is less than three years old, with Rodgers Wade constantly looking for new technologies to enhance its facility.

“We have state-of-the-art machinery, which includes a CNC beam saw, CNC routers (nested and POD based), horizontal and vertical point-to-point centers, straight line edgebanders and a CNC contour edgebander,” Hamner says. “We have various other industry standard work centers, such as sliding table saws, chop saws, and wood working table clamps. We also provide steel fabrication, solid surface fabrication, and industrial finishing.”

A recent investment, the SNX Vitap contour edgebanding system from Maze Machinery, which won a Visionary New Product Award at the 2013 AWFS Fair, allowed the company to fulfill a time-sensitive contract for 50,000 shelf components for the seasonal shelving program of a national retailer. Using a laser guidance system, the contour edgebander rotates workpieces through the banding head to cover all edges in a single, continuous pass in a 45-second cycle.

“Because of technological gains, our company can now react to customer’s requests on short notice, meeting their needs for information and product in a short time while maintaining standards of excellence in craftsmanship,” Hamner says.

“Components that once required three separate operations can now be completed on one CNC,” he says. “Additions to machinery such as labeling, trimming, air and lift tables only add to the value that technology brings to the shop. In short, we are now capable of performing our work at increased speed and quality with decreased cost,” he adds.

Equally important is the value of technology to lean implementation. Rodgers Wade is implementing a lean program and, with input from its employees, has begun by restructuring the production floor for a more seamless

flow of products through its facility.

“It is inherently beneficial to changing the culture of a company from one that maximizes machinery at the expense of the downstream process to one focused on flow of product efficiently through a plant,” says Hamner.

“At one time, the shortfall of technology was in its rapid advance. Machinery became obsolete before it had reached a small portion of its life cycle. Today, however even that slight drawback has been mitigated. With equipment that allows you to expand its capabilities, as a company grows or as technology changes, upgrading to the latest and greatest function is simple and relatively inexpensive.”

The plant is managed by a group with more than 30 years of experience in the business, aided with the help of Global Shop, which is an ERP Solutions System that offers real time inventory and a work station solution system. Rodgers Wade also uses other software programs in its processes, including design software by AutoCAD, Microvellum and Solid Works, as well as Router CIM, Woodwop and Cut Rite programs for the machines.

“Technology increases the speed with which information is transmitted, whether internally or externally,” Hamner says. “Through the proper use of office and mill software and hardware, customers and employees can share vast amounts of data with the click of a button, response times decreased from weeks to hours and projects compressed into never-before thought of time frames.”

WOODEN GLOBE 2014 TECHNOLOGY WINNER

Winning awards is nothing new to Rodgers Wade. In addition to being named the 2014 Wooden Globe winner for Commitment to Excellence Through Technology, the store fixture and millwork company has received numerous accolades, including the 2012 Industrial Appreciation Award in recognition of its successful expansion and increased jobs for its community from the Paris Economic Development Corp. Rodgers Wade was nominated for the Wooden Globe by Erich Mazurek of Maze Machinery.

“We are honored to have been awarded the Wooden Globe for the Commitment to Excellence through Technology,” says Darren Hamner, Director of Client Solutions. “We are very conscious of the machinery that is used in our industry and always plan for future opportunities when making any purchase.”

At the 275,000-square-foot plant, technology has benefitted a wide range of operations, from sales to shipping and everything in between.