

# A small shop *acts like* a big one

## Production increases 300 percent in one year with new equipment

By Brooke Baldwin  
Wisdom

**T**he workforce of Alameda, CA-based DB Godfrey Inc. only consists of four people, but that doesn't stop the high-end commercial and residential casework manufacturer from taking on the projects one might find in a much larger plant. "Since we purchased our new equipment, we have gotten into a whole other aspect of production," says owner Derek Godfrey. "Before, we couldn't compete with anyone on melamine, MDF or specified projects. Now we are being overrun with more standard jobs from the contractors or architects that we've been dealing with for years. They had been outsourcing jobs that didn't fit our budget. Now we are definitely able to work in any style of cabinet or casework. We maintain a small shop with only the four of us, but we've upped production 300 percent in the last year."

Five years ago, DB Godfrey started with two people and some off the shelf equipment taking on some small commercial jobs and boat interior work. Since then it has moved to high-end residential custom work — kitchens, vanities, entertainment centers and more. The first real equipment Godfrey says the company bought was a Joos Junior hot press. The company had been doing a lot of hand laid veneer work and was vacuum bagging everything. "It used to take us about an hour a panel to lay up a kitchen door," he notes. "Now we can press an average sized kitchen in a couple of hours. It's amazing."

After purchasing an SCMI sliding panel saw, Godfrey decided on a DMG RX-10PM edgebander. "That was our first big purchase," he says. "Because we had been doing custom work, we had been using solid wood edge banding



Derek Godfrey, owner of Alameda, CA-based DB Godfrey Inc., says his DMG RX-10PM edgebander from Delmac Machinery Group has brought increased speed, accuracy and diversity to his high-end residential and commercial casework production.

so we didn't use any tape. We were doing it the old fashioned way with a clamp rack and spending a lot of time on one little piece. We ended up getting the largest edgebander Delmac carried. This machine has been a wonderful timesaver. It is capable of running a 5/8" by 2 1/2" solid wood stick, and it has a 3 mm station on it, which is incredible for accuracy. We just did a big job for a huge commercial cabinet shop that had 800 damaged doors in our area. With the 3 mm edgebander, we were able to strip the 3 mm PVC and give them a perfectly clean edge again. In addition to the 3 mm station, the DMG RX-10PM has on-the-fly corner rounding and top and bottom flush trim. Before, we were at a half an hour a part by the time everything was trimmed and cut and flushed. Now it's literally a few minutes."

When Godfrey looked at edgebanders, he ended up purchasing a CNC router as well— a Busellato JET 3006. "Like the edgebander, where the switchover from thin tape to solid wood banding is a matter of minutes, the CNC router has brought us that kind of diversity. There's no issue as to whether or not we're going to break away from this kind of building style or go to that kind. The router has allowed us to do some small commercial projects for really high-end spatial places and a lot of curved work. We're doing a project now where the walls are serpentine, and we cut all the plates and door headers. Before this machinery, a project like that would have taken us weeks to lay out. It was a matter of hours to run that on the machines."

DB Godfrey is in the process of purchasing Pattern Sys-

## Custom Shop

tems software now. “We’re using autoCAD now, and Pattern Systems is autoCAD based,” he explains. “We hope that it will speed programming. The programming is the slowest part of the process, and the Pattern Systems will make us more efficient for the lower end jobs as well as the custom jobs. There’s the sense that if you can pick a standard box and just put in the dimensions and run it to the machine rather than picking sides and tops and bottoms and drawer parts and trying to assemble this thing in the computer before it goes to the machine, it will save us time. It will take us down from an hour to a few minutes. That’s what we are working towards.”

Due to a lack of experience, Godfrey says it took about six months to get to where the company could do all it wanted to do on the router. “There are a lot of subtleties, and it takes time to learn the parameters you have to work within,” he says. “It doesn’t happen overnight. We were running parts right away, but it took six months to get to the full efficiency. As a small custom shop, we really didn’t realize how we built cabinets because we never had a standard construction. With the machines, you want to standardize as much as you can so that you have more efficiency because you’re not starting over from scratch every time. You learn that in the cabinet components and even in very custom work — there are some basic elements that are very clear throughout the process.”

Godfrey says although the company enjoys the custom market, it wants to grow its standard casework segment a little more. “It’s more direct — the speed in which you can produce — and there’s a lot less hand-holding than with the homeowner, for instance,” he says. “The custom side of the business is more challenging, however, and very interesting. Trying to produce the customer’s vision is the most difficult part. Our kitchens average around \$75,000 with hand laid veneer and matched solid drawers and doors. We’ve worked with everything from ebony to European beech.

“We pride ourselves in that we actually pick up a lot of jobs that a commercial shop turns down because of the difficulty. We have a project now where a commercial shop is doing all the standard cabinetry, but we’re doing all the reception and front-end work that is more complicated. That equipment produces more than any number of employees ever could for the price. It’s incredible. Before we had the equipment, we were going through one unit of material a month at tops. This month, we’ve gone through six units of material. We have people calling us from all over now because they are aware of the equipment for specialized tasks.” **MW**

*For more information circle Reader Service numbers: Joos 404, SCMI 405, Delmac Machinery 406, Pattern Systems 407*



Derek Godfrey credits his new Busellato JET 3006 CNC router along with his DMG RX-10 PM edgebander from Delmac Machinery for increasing his production 300 percent in one year due to customers knowing he has the equipment for specialized tasks.