

Big Company + SMALL COMPANY = Good Business

BY SUZANNE VANGILDER

Andy Wilzoch likes machines. Twenty-three years ago he parlayed his affinity for technology into a 1000 square-foot store fixtures shop in Denver, Colo. Since then things have continued to develop. Wilzoch's endeavors now occupy a 215,000 square foot facility that produces RTF components, TFM and HPL panels.

Perhaps Wilzoch developed his solid, two-part business model to support his equipment habit. After all, the only way to sustainably buy the latest high-tech machinery is to make it work for you. Or maybe he's one of those intuitive entrepreneurs who can see around corners. Whatever the reason, the combined capabilities of Wilzoch's nationally renowned store fixtures company Premier Eurocase (which also does components and closet systems), and his hometown sweetheart TFM

and HPL manufacturing operation Roücke, Inc. pretty much have it covered, quite literally, when it comes to laminated components. Together, the two operations bypass normal supply chains to offer fast, flexible fulfillment on projects of all sizes.

NATIONWIDE

Premier Eurocase employs 70 people and manufactures about 16,000 store fixtures annually for large national brands, including Sports Authority, Walgreens, Quizno's Subs and Famous Footwear. The 70,000 square-foot-shop runs membrane pressing and panel processing equipment. Premier's sister company Roücke occupies an adjacent 30,000 square-foot shop that manufactures TFM and HPL panels. A separate 115,000 square-foot building is used for assembly, shipping and warehouse space.

"Our capital investment in equipment gives us huge advantages," says Wilzoch. "Because we have all the capabilities in-house we can do rapid proto-typing with the actual materials, from napkin sketch to actual product, within a few days." In addition to simply fulfilling requests, Wilzoch and his engineers collaborate with customers to design pieces that meet specific performance criteria. "Shops tend to design to their capabilities. So if a standard cabinet shop works in HPL, they design in HPL to suit their processes and minimize outsourcing. We do TFM, HPL and RTF in-house, so we can easily design components that are difficult for our competition to match," says Wilzoch.

Material matching programs drive Premier's color offering. "A lot of our standard melamines were picked because they have RTF matches," says Wilzoch. "We go out of our way to make sure vinyl matches our melamine." Premier buys their PVC films from many suppliers, but prefers Renolit for their great customer service.

LOCAL

Premier sources their TFM and HPL from Roücke, as do the majority of the small cabinet shops in Colorado. "Andy (Wilzoch) started Roücke in 2004. He always did HPL at Premier and bought melamine from other places. Then they were doing huge store builds that required so much melamine that he bought the press to supply Premier," explains Tierra Goble, Operations Manager for Roücke's seven-person operation. "Then local shops got wind of the capability and there was a lot of local demand."

Roücke manufactures chamfered panels, selling TFM through distribution in Colorado and HPL direct to local cabinet shops. "We're kind of a niche market," says Goble. "We pride ourselves on quality and the ability to do both large and small runs very quickly." By sticking close to home Roücke maximizes speed to market, even for specialty orders. This allows them to thrive on a local level in an industry typically dominated by giant national processors.



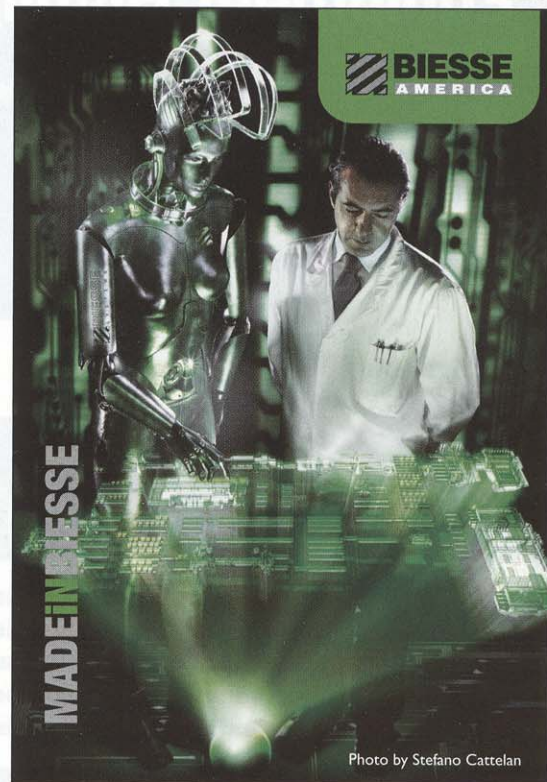


Another way that Roücke differentiates itself is by marketing its product as “premium” melamine. Catch that? Not as commodity panels, but as the versatile, durable, valuable product that it is. “TFM is so easy to use, I think people are beginning to understand its performance. Especially since we use the same name-brand Wilsonart and Formica papers in TFM and HPL, I see people substituting TFM in many applications that would have normally used HPL,” says Goble.

Roücke stocks 4-by-8-foot melamine sheets in 35 popular designs that match their RTF offering. Primary melamine paper suppliers are Coverright and Arclin. They also offer a wide variety of substrates, the most popular choice being industrial-grade western pine particleboard and MDF core. Specialty substrates, such as fire-rated, moisture-resistant and recycled/ NAUF board, supplied by Boise Cascade, Collins and Sierra Pine are also available.

SYNERGY

What is particularly interesting about Wilzoch's endeavors, beyond his “relentless acquisition” of the latest technology and manufacturing processes, is how his capabilities and distribution models inoculate his businesses against economic shifts. Although the first half of 2010 was predictably slow for Premier's retail fixture operation, business was extremely robust for Roücke, who has been supplying thousands upon thousands of HPL and TFM panels for big government, education and hospital projects. In developing both large and small business strategies, Wilzoch has fortified his operations. Business is good, customers are happy, and Wilzoch is probably already planning his next equipment upgrade. ■



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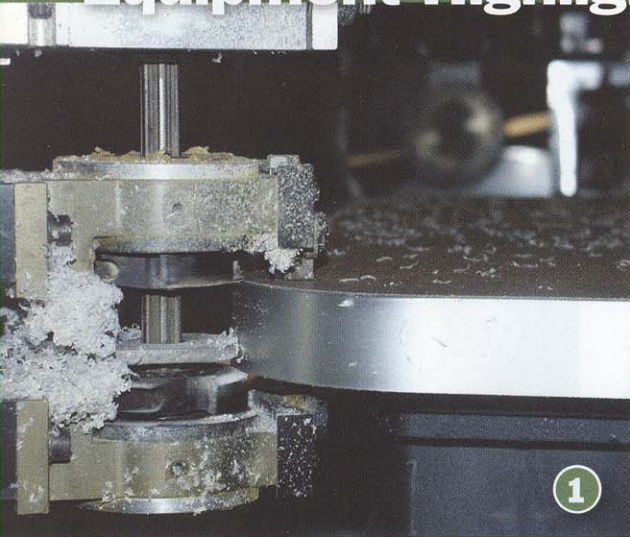


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Equipment Highlights



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Between Premier Eurocase and Röchle, Andy Wilzoch has a sophisticated collection of equipment that allows for extremely quick production of TFM, HPL and 3DL components.



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At Premier production processes start with cut patterns that are downloaded to three available CNC panel saws. Total saw production is well over 1,000 sheets per day. As each part is cut, labels printed in real time describe the part with a bar code that the machining centers will read. There are three Holzma panel saws at Premier Eurocase, including an: **HPL-380 Power Concept**, **HPP-350** and a **HKL-11 Angular Saw** that features an independent ripcut and cross-cut saw in the same unit and automatic material handling between the two.

Three Homag BAZ CNC contour edgbanders carry out all the typical routing and drilling operations expected from a machining center, but these machines also simultaneously apply edgebanding to shaped components, trim and scrape in one continuous process. All of this is completed without the part leaving the machine. The facility also has three straight line **Homag edgbanders**, and the prototype department has a **Brandt edgbander**.

Premier's six Weeke point to points, including a large **Weeke BHC-655**, are very flexible machining centers used for drilling, routing and grooving. These are considered to be "Pod & Rail" machines, which gives them the ability to be quickly set up on changeovers from part to part.

The Wemhöner Basic Plus is a fully optioned membrane press for flat or 3D laminating. The membrane press in conjunction with **Röchle's Wemhöner short-cycle melamine press**, gives Premier Eurocase extremely fast custom 3D component capabilities.

Premier has a **Homag Machining Center** featuring a **BOF-132** and **BOF-311**, used primarily for routing operations, slatwall and pre-machining RTF. And a collection of horizontal drills for dowel drilling and insertion, including two **Weeke ABD-150s**, a **Gannomat Index 125** and a **Gannomat Spectrum**. s&p



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- 1 HOMAG BAZ CONTOURED EDGBANDER
- 2 TFM PANELS COOLING AFTER COMING OUT OF A WEMHÖNER SHORT-CYCLE MELAMINE PRESS
- 3 WEMHÖNER BASIC PLUS MEMBRANE PRESS
- 4 HOLZMA HKL-11 ANGULAR SAW
- 5 A CONTOURED PIECE MACHINED ON A HOMAG BAZ