



A Ward Design

Kevin R. Ward and employees focus on building products that are reliable, durable and aesthetically innovative



When a customer considers purchasing a product, two product features often influence the customer's decision – functionality and aesthetic quality. Without functionality, a product can't carry out its purpose. Without aesthetic quality, a product might seem bland and uninteresting. But with the right balance, that product can help a potential customer become a buyer.

The importance of functionality and aesthetic quality is no less evident in the woodworking industry. The woodworking company A Ward Design of Winter Haven, Fla., is an example of this. Kevin R. Ward and his company are focused on selling products that function effectively and durably yet are also aesthetically unique.

Getting Started

Ward's woodworking experience began when he was a child. He said his father had a contracting business and built homes. As a teenager, Ward began working with his father. Then, when Ward was in his 20s, he became an electrician, but he discovered he preferred woodworking. He said he enjoyed building cabinetry and woodworking, which many of his customers refer to as the centerpieces of their homes.

Eventually, Ward decided to start a woodworking company. In 2001, he established A Ward Design and operated it out of his garage. He said that when the company began, it was a two-person crew without a lot of supplies or equipment. At this time, Ward's woodworking experience included building an entertainment center, trimming houses, constructing mantels and more, but he had to learn how to build cabinets. Next, he acquired vendors and customers. After initial success, the company relocated and became a four-person crew.

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Business continued to expand. Finally, A Ward Design moved to its current location – an industrial complex with 6,000 square feet, 400 of which are an office area for the company.

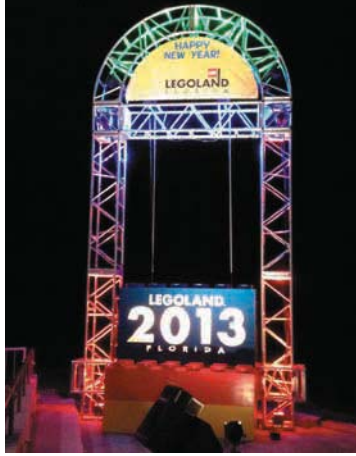
Adapting and Innovating

A Ward Design has definitely adapted over the years. Although there have been challenges, the company has diversified and innovated to continue on. For example, the recession might have had more of an impact. However, Ward said his employees are very skilled and that they were able to prepare for the recession months before it occurred. In doing so, the company weathered the recession and expanded, too.

Additionally, A Ward Design has developed a focus on providing products that are both functional and high in aesthetic quality. Ward said he enjoys building products that function with grace and also have the quality of traditional craftsmanship. He added that some companies offer what he refers to as “fast food cabinetry,” which is nondurable and not high in aesthetic quality. Ward added that his goal is to provide products that will last for many, many years. He said the company’s products are composed of real wood, built by craftsmen and hand-applied with a finish by one of the company’s artists.

A Ward Design sells in a variety of markets, including theme parks, specialty projects, residential and commercial. The company builds a varied selection of products, such as furniture, offices, entertain-

ment centers, theme park items, fireplace mantels and specialty woodwork. For instance, the company built Lego blocks from wood for Legoland Florida's New Year's celebration in December 2012. Also, A Ward Design's work has been featured in magazines like Wood & Wood Products and Custom Woodworking Business.



For cabinet construction, the company usually uses frameless construction but sometimes beaded inset or face frame. The cabinet materials are plywood and pre-finished birch. Cabinet hardware is from Blum. Ward said referrals are the main advertising source for the company.

Setting Goals

It's been years since the establishment of A Ward Design, and much has changed. Ward said the employee roster has increased, and the company has developed its use of advanced machinery and software. This has led to experience in more markets. He added that the company is currently very busy and working on many different projects.

A Ward Design has many plans for the future, too. Ward said that for the long term, the goal is for the company to sell products across the U.S. For the short term, the goal is to hire two or more technicians and add more space and a showroom.

For more information about A Ward Design, call 863-325-9070 or visit www.awarddesign.net. ❖



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