

PETE HULST, ROB  
HARTHOORN AND  
KEN ANTON  
OWNERS  
OF ADORA  
KITCHENS  
& CABINETRY

# Process, Training, Behaviour

PROFESSIONALISM  
QUALITY  
INNOVATION



MARCH 2022

## Invest in advice, reap the benefits

- **The main takeaway is to always follow these 3 words and in this order:**
- **Process, training behavior.**
- **Do we have a process? Yes.**
- **Did we train the right people? Yes.**
- **Now look at the behavior from management to maintain and the employee to follow.**
- **Management and employees are responsible for all 3.**
- **Any issue can relate back to this.**

Adora Kitchens has been proudly operating out of the same location in Coaldale, Alberta for 40 years! With 45 employees this company has grown from operating in just over 6,000 sq ft. to now operating in 30,000 sq ft. They serve a market that is basically local and within a 3 hour radius of their shop.

Their customers are contractors, private consumers and they also work with one distributor.

While the original founder of the company retired a few years back, the current 3 owners have been with the company for 38 years (Ken), 34 years (Pete) and 23 years (Rob)!

Adora has built a solid reputation and is known for providing on time service and after sale service and quality. As Ken Anton says "We build anything from basic spec units to executive custom homes."

Adora is a proud member of CKCA. One day Ken called CKCA about something and we got talking about the industry. Ken shared the story of how he benefitted from hiring an external consultant. While sometimes business owners may or may not feel they get value,



Ken couldn't say enough positive things about Adora's consulting experience and even told us that to this day the company reaps the benefits from it. So we asked Ken if he'd share his story so others could learn from his journey and what he learned.



### Proud of what they do

We started by asking Ken what he and his partners are most proud of in their business. "We're proud of our staff and their ability to look after our customers in all aspects of a project. Staying current with technology and

machinery to produce efficient and quality product is also very important to us."

### Feels like family

While Adora is not a family run business, Ken will tell you "We feel like this is a family business. We have lots of long-term employees. The current owners have no relation to each other, we've just worked together for many years which makes it feel like family. We all bought in after about 15 years as employees of the company."

### Knowing when to seek outside help

In 2011-2012 the company was working with a marketing company to help them align their staff, their customers and their goals. After completion of that plan, they got a recommendation to look at a business consultant. "We knew how to build and install cabinets no problem" says Ken. "What we lacked in was the way to run a business by working on the business instead of in the business (which is typical in many businesses)."

### Selecting the consultant

The partners interviewed a couple of consultants to help them with the project. "We didn't need a person to tell us to build cabinets, we needed a person who could help us with running a business.

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# “Our business was our classroom”

We ended up selecting a guy who’s main difference was he would work shoulder to shoulder with us..

The day-to-day operations of the company went on as usual because they still had to produce for their clients. “The consultant was always available to answer questions and challenge us and guide us.” Says Ken. “There were many after hours spent on projects.”

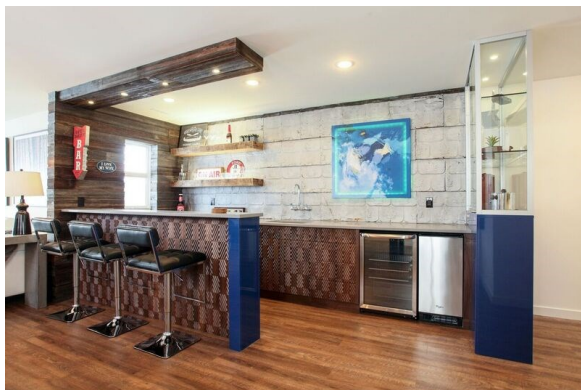
## Should to shoulder

The consultant worked with Adora for 2 years and in that time the consultant worked with the company almost every day, about 4 hours a day with an in-house office working with managers and department employees to help set up processes. As Ken says “It was like having another employee in-house”.

When asked if Ken and his partners were skeptical about the requests the consultant made initially, Ken says “Not really. We knew that we needed help and the consultant was very knowledgeable. He was in business for a long time with a few large corporations which usually have these systems figured out.”

## The outcome

For Ken and his partners, the consultant helped them to develop so many systems for all areas of their business office and shop.



While it’s been 10 years since the consultant worked with Adora, Ken says without hesitation that “The advice we got from the consultant is absolutely still relevant today. We learned how to manage a business and manage employees. How to make proper business decisions based on fact and data. Doing the drill (write it down, work it out).

Not making emotional or compassionate decisions.” Adora still uses the same recommended processes and adjusts them as needed to keep them current.

The outcome for Adora has been better overall morale because their systems are now managed better and there’s been an increase in profit

## Main takeaways

So what were the takeaways from the consultant, what got implemented and worked? According to Ken it’s clear that the main takeaway is to “Always follow 3 words in this order:

### Process. Training. Behavior.

1. Do we have a process? Yes.
2. Did we train the right people? Yes.
3. Now look at the behavior from management to maintain and the employee to follow.

Management and employees are responsible for all 3. Any issue can relate back to this.”

## Any regrets?

As you can imagine, hiring a consultant for two years is a significant financial undertaking. We asked Ken if he had any regrets with the experience overall. “We have no regrets at all. The main factor is that the consultant was here to guide us. If we knew all the business equations that we learned from our consultant we wouldn’t need him. We feel like we took a business management class right here in our own classroom.”

## Looking ahead

We asked Ken for his thoughts on the future for shops like Adora. “The future of independent shops will always be there. Some customers are looking for custom variety, quality and service. If you can provide them, you will always be busy.



We are always looking at new ways to improve our processes and efficiencies for quality by technology and machinery. We started on a road map for succession planning as a way to keep all owners aware what the future looks like for each owner.”

## These stories matter!

It’s been a year since CKCA started to capture the stories of our members in these profiles. Every company is different and has a story to tell. There is no one magic method to running a business. What we’ve noticed is that each person we interviewed talks openly about their strengths and weaknesses and how they overcame the challenges they faced. There is a tremendous appetite in our industry for continual improvement!

Whether you hire a consultant, seek advice from your peers, attend CKCA events or find other educational channels, the bottom line is to be open and willing to learn. As one CKCA member said in our January profile “be curious”.

Ken Anton has been a past CKCA Board member. He has toured many facilities, participated in many manufacturers roundtable discussions and is still open to learning and sharing with others.

We are really grateful Ken and his partners shared their story. It’s a great example of a community business that has taken pride in what it does, worked to continually improve...and thrived!

Happy 40th anniversary to Adora Kitchens & Cabinetry! We wish you continued success and look forward to watching you evolve and build beautiful spaces for many years to come!

**CKCA celebrates innovation and continual improvement**

**An industry that proudly builds in Canada!**

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