



**ALAIN
OUZILLEAU
PRESIDENT &
CEO, CABICO&CO**

- **Custom cabinetry is no longer a question of choosing inside a catalogue; it's now taking a dream and making it reality.**
- **The impact on our employees will be positive as well. Their work will be more rewarding, and they will be able to use their talent and skillsets for customization and craftsmanship, which is what matters most.**
- **We have been inspired by other great Canadian cabinet manufacturers, and we hope to do the same for others in the industry.**

Technology with a human touch

PROFESSIONALISM
QUALITY
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2022 INNOVATION



Connected manufacturing—artisanal craftsmanship

Cabico&co is one of North America's leading custom cabinetry manufacturers, privately owned, with a team of 600+ specialists and craftsmen and over 370,000 sq. ft. of manufacturing facilities based in Coaticook, Quebec and St. Catharines, Ontario. They have a network of more than 550 dealers across North America and are fuelled by over 35 years of solid growth. Their business approach is to harness the latest technology while still incorporating an essential human touch into every step of the design and manufacturing process and every aspect of client and business relationships.

There are 330 employees based in Coaticook and the other 300 are in St. Catharine's with approximately two-thirds living locally or about 20 minutes away from the plant.

Value placed on the human touch

Alain Ouzilleau, President and CEO admits that he faces the same challenges that most in the industry are feeling—the labour shortage. "Some of the ways we have been able to mitigate this challenge is to recruit abroad and hire internationally. We have 36 new employees who will soon be welcomed to Coaticook (12 from Senegal and 24 from the Philippines). We are also hiring an additional 70 individuals from the

Cabico&co

Philippines, half will work in St. Catharines, and the other half will work in Coaticook. Hiring internationally requires a lot of work and expense with securing housing, immigration, etc. but right now, technology just isn't enough, we still have a need for employees who can infuse the human touch into our products."

Investing in Technology

On September 22, Cabico&co unveiled their new ultramodern facilities, new equipment, and upgrades to their Coaticook manufacturing plant. Alain told



CKCA that "With nearly \$25 million in updates, including major digital and technological transformation, this upgrade now positions Cabico&co as a leading player to increase production and growth in domestic and North American markets. Cabico&co's plant optimization strategy meshes automation and robotization technology, connected manufacturing, and the know-how and artisanal approaches of specialists and craftsmen who bring personalized touches to the most complex projects. The

design and manufacturing of custom cabinets require seamless communication between people, machines, and systems. Achieving this balance was a significant implementation challenge for the technology teams at Cabico&co and its Quebec partners Dunin Technologies, Nubik (Deloitte), Createch (Talan), PSTOX, and Automatech, which managed to converge, integrate, and synergize a range of software and technologies."

Automating "custom"

Cabico&co has a multi-year vision to ease customer experiences in designing and manufacturing personalized projects. While some may think that automation will limit customization, Alain doesn't see things that way; "This massive transformation has only one purpose—to be at the service of our woodworkers, so they spend more time doing what they're best at, infusing their craftsmanship into our products."

"Technology is associated with standard production (i.e. no more custom). Robots and systems free up our talented craftsmen's time. This helps to increase production capacity and to produce projects of unparalleled quality. The system transformation that is happening right now is influencing the designer's design because we can take these designs and send them directly to our production system.

“One platform that communicates”

Each project contains more than 600 parts. All these parts have unique routes inside our systems. These parts converge towards the assembly line, where they are assembled and shipped to our customers.

For Alain and his team they recognized that custom cabinetry brings a significant communication challenge between the systems, the people, and the machines. Alain admits “It was impossible to find one system that answered all the challenges we had for producing custom cabinetry. So, we had to find one expert system as our solution. We ended up finding one system to join all these systems together.”

Cocreator platform

Alain is excited about the Cocreator platform which will become the cornerstone of the communication between Cabico&co and their partners. The idea behind cocreator is to move away from a catalogue and Alain says “We want to take a designer’s creativity and bring it to the machine on the shop floor. Custom cabinetry is no longer a question of choosing inside a catalogue; it’s now taking a dream and making it reality.”

“What our team has accomplished over the last couple of years is just paramount. I’m so proud of the work they’ve done. We truly have an excellent team.”



From financing to impact—The positive ripple effect

In addition to Cabico&co’s financial investments, they are investing in innovative systems that will help drive the cabinet industry forward. Alain believes the biggest impact from the investments he has made is on his customers. He points out that “Ultimately, it will be much easier for our customers to work with us. The process for a designer to design, order, and receive exactly what they envisioned will be more seamless. In addition, the impact on our employees will be positive as well. Their work will be more

rewarding, and they will be able to use their talent and skillsets for customization and craftsmanship, which is what matters.”



Pictured above, from left to right: Simon Madore (Mayor of Coaticook), Maryse Bellerose (Director, Corporate Financing at BDC), Alain Ouzilleau (President, Cabico&co), Francois Parenteau, (Business Development Director, Desjardins Sherbrooke)

“From day one, our purpose has been to contribute to our stakeholders, employees, and customers’ success. And for that, we’ve always had big ideas and visions regarding how we can get there to become their best partners. I strongly believe we need to invest in technology and be more efficient. We’re the early adopters of technology, and this is necessary to stay competitive in the North American cabinetry industry.”

“We have amazing long-term financial partners that have helped us through this process. We are very grateful for the trust and support of the Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC), Desjardins, Export Development Canada (EDC), and Investissement Québec.”

Looking forward IN Canada

Alain is realistic about the challenges our industry faces. Despite those challenges, Alain believes there are excellent career paths in the cabinet industry and recognizes that “We need to do a better job of educating Canadians on the career opportunities that exist within the trades. This is so important for the success of the industry as a whole.” When asked if Alain had considered taking production off-shore, Alain responded “We are a proudly Canadian manufacturer. Here in Canada, our employees truly have an incredible work ethic and craftsmanship.”

Advice for the industry

Recognizing Cabico&co is a leader and a

large manufacturer in Canada, Alain knows the industry is comprised of a wide range of SME’s. To any company thinking of expanding and investing in more technology Alain reflects on his own experience at Cabico&co; “It’s taking significant time to plan and ensure we have the right equipment. We have had to assess the requirements based on the nature of our products and match the technology and equipment to those needs.”

For Alain and his team they have embraced a common vision—to go the extra mile. They want to attract the best talent, customers, and partners and Alain believes that his facilities’ digital and technological transformation is a force for positive change. Alain adds “It enables us to offer customers operational excellence to meet their expectations and ideas while providing a motivating work environment for our employees. I am very proud of my people, without whom the migration to updated industry processes would not have been possible.”

On behalf of the CKCA, we would like Alain and his team to know how proud we are of you too! Alain makes time from his very busy schedule to participate in one of CKCA’s committees and supports the work we continue to do to advocate for our industry. Alain doesn’t just talk the talk he walks the walk too.



CKCA President, Pete Fournier attended Cabico&co’s unveiling on September 22 (and admits to taking pictures and being inspired by what he saw!). As Pete says “Cabico is a proud member of CKCA and it’s these kinds of innovations that drives the industry forward and sets a path that inspires us all and shows us what is possible.”

CKCA would like to wish Alain and his entire team at Cabico&co the very best in this exciting next chapter!

Professionalism—Quality—Innovation and Made in Canada!

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