



From Strategy to Change

JAN - MAR 2023

PROFESSIONALISM
QUALITY
INNOVATION



TREVOR CHAULK PRESIDENT OF CHAULK WOODWORKING

- Chaulk is meeting rapidly changing customer expectations and focused on working directly with partners to help them evolve and grow their businesses.
- Chaulk recognizes the changing landscape of the industry, going head-to-head with big box stores and offering industry-leading products with the service level Chaulk is known for.
- Chaulk's goal with the rebrand is to become the household name for cabinetry related design and purchases.

Walk the Chaulk

Trevor Chaulk is President of [Chaulk Woodworking](#) located in Minden, Ontario with a population of just over 6,000. It's a pristine place to have a business where a great work-life balance can be had.

Trevor started the company in 2009 and incorporated in 2016. With 95% or more focused on the residential home owner, the business is now merging into a contractor incentive program with a goal of 10-15% of the business this year sold to contractors. Growing from 94 kitchens produced in 2021, Chaulk is now producing 97 kitchens plus he's working on a dealer network with a goal to create 3-5% of sales. Both dealer and contractor programs were launched to create more market share and have contractors buy from Chaulk Woodworking instead of local lumber yards. As Trevor says "Contractors can install their own which allows us to free up the already short supply of installers. By doing this, it increases our focus on becoming a manufacturer and increases production volumes."

A clearly defined goal

Chaulk was clear from when the business started to become the largest cabinet manufacturer in the area. Today Trevor Chaulk is proud that he has achieved this with only 1-2 smaller shops locally still in operation, when



there used to be 10 other smaller craftsman style companies.

Strategy change required

Chaulk faces the same business challenges as others in the industry and perhaps even more acute being in a small town, i.e. finding skilled or semi-skilled workers is no easy task and increasing costs to train. But this



hasn't stopped Chaulk from recognizing a strategy change was required. "We used to focus on primarily mid to high level cabinetry, but have realized that based on our area and skill sets, we are best suited for low to mid level which we can produce quickly, accurately and profitably by using the processes and technology we implemented." Trevor adds "Seasonal swings used to be very predictable over the years, but since COVID, it is

constantly shifting and unpredictable when it comes to our sales/installation cycles."

But while there are challenges, Trevor is first to tell you (with a smile on his face) that "Benefits include, for the most part, if you create a great product and offer competitive pricing and above all great service, you create a high level of repetitive referral and you get to know a lot of people in your area. There's a lack of direct competition in our area, we are now the only custom cabinetry shop around. The drive to work is always a dream as there is little to no traffic and you get to see wildlife and the beautiful nature here."

Becoming a household name

Chaulk knows their community very well. There is a lack of growth opportunities and no industrial areas that can house a large manufacturer. With a depleting workforce, Chaulk is working on alternative ideas that can allow the company to grow. "This area has been very good to us and we do not take that for granted" says Trevor. With local and some cottage market, Chaulk gets referrals, but admits there's still a lot of people who drive by and don't know Chaulk is there. "Our goal with our recent rebrand is to become the household name for cabinetry related design and purchases." As a community business Chaulk has deep roots and involved in charitable and fundraising efforts.

“Chaulk it up to experience”

Learn, adapt, focus

Trevor admits that in all his years in the industry, he has learned that there is still lots to learn! He has found that some of his best ideas and growth came when he got out of his shop attending CKCA events. Connecting to a community of like-minded helped him realize he's not alone and he has a community he can reach out to.

The company has also experienced some major struggles with floods, skills training, employee turnover and being an under-funded company. But the main success has come from Chaulk's ability to adapt to change, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. “We had to learn over the years what really works as opposed to what I wanted from this company. We have standardized custom cabinetry and it has been beneficial to the overall success of trying to keep things simple in a very custom world of cabinetry. We are continuing to focus on growth, but this time around, we are focusing on stable growth.”

Chaulk is introducing product lines that are very fast to quote, design, manufacturer and deliver while maintaining profitability, they do not deviate from what is working which will allow Chaulk to become fully self-funded in the next year or so.



Trevor Chaulk guides a tour of local stakeholder around the newly rebranded Chaulk, located at 11431 Highway 35 in Minden. /Emily Stonehouse, staff

Business 2 February 2023

Chaulk full of local pride

Getting clarity

When Trevor looks back he admits that while they've been very busy and growing, they were not as profitable. Trevor felt the company lacked clarity around its brand and what they did even with their showroom in a neighbouring town to get more market share.

By creating a new brand it allows Chaulk to become a household name through simplicity in a very complex industry. The name is intended to create curiosity and make people look. As Chaulk gets deeper into the rebrand, it will introduce an e-commerce platform and new products that can be purchased without the aid of design. A longer-term goal is to widen the reach to a national level of sales/manufacturing.

Technology to competitiveness

With a background in the automotive tool and die industry, Trevor believes the entire industry has to advance faster in tech, systems, machinery and overall customer experiences. For his own company “I would love to see us moving to another facility so we can become an industry leader.” But Trevor echoes the same views as so many companies—that the industry needs to attract good people to work and to create faster and more accurate products to compete with increasing imported cabinets.

Securing a future for Chaulk and the industry

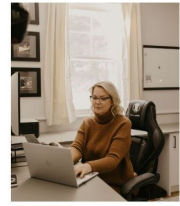
Chaulk knows that many people don't want to get into the industry as business owners because of the large investment of time, money and above all, patience! But Chaulk is working on a business opportunity that could fix the problem and encourage more people back into the industry to become future business leaders for the industry.

First, Chaulk is working on a rural manufacturing benefit summary that promotes working in rural areas away from the overcrowding of large urban centres. Secondly, Chaulk has seen mass production go up alongside handcraft woodworking, both competing for the same business. “There is no financial market that we are competing within, we have been selling projects and jobs for so many years, but now we must look at what we do—we manufacture and sell a PRODUCT!” Trevor adds “The pricing structures are more based from shop expense/material structure, instead of a product competitive structure.”

What that means is that Trevor feels the

Customer Review

"The new home office that Chaulk created for us has been life-changing. It was cost-effective and we were able to totally overhaul our filing, storage and organization. Manufactured with the new SleekLine product, it's also very easy to clean and extremely durable. Bonus: We had it installed 2 weeks after order finalization!"



The Schultz's
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industry is under serviced and under recognized. He adds “We are a fully/semi custom industry where people can have anything made. We are a trade of craftspeople working in a job/project world, we need to focus on a national system to create more unity and recognition in our industry. If we change the terminology and create a more product-term industry, we will be viewed as a larger power to compete and reduce the offshore issues that undermine our industry. We can accomplish this through better training on efficiency, systems and technology practices.”

Looking for work? —Listen Up

Trevor walks the talk. On top of running a busy shop, Trevor makes time to sit on the Board of the CKCA. He also wants to see a younger generation get to know this industry to ensure its future. Trevor believes that CKCA can be more than just an Association, it can be an Industry Partner to ensure greater focus on inspiring and training youth. He is also proud to give back to the industry.

“I am most proud of creating a vision and seeing it come to life, both in cabinetry and company/employee successes.”

“Working as a team, I believe, is the most rewarding. There are a great deal of opportunities that come to fruition for people who have desire and work hard. I am a strong advocate for youth and even second career programs and encourage everyone who may be interested, to at least it a try!”

Want to hear more ShopChaulk? [Watch this Video](#) of Trevor and other industry leaders speaking to students at Conestoga College, September 2022.

There's an exciting future waiting for you in the kitchen cabinet industry!

ckca.ca