

Simply Amish Success

Providing coatings, consistency and a strong partnership

Inside about 40 individual woodshops in Illinois and Indiana, Amish craftsmen fill orders for heirloom-quality furniture that is sold across the United States and Canada. How do these individuals market their goods so widely and with such success? The answer is Simply Amish.

Founded in 1979 and based in Arcola, Ill., Simply Amish has developed a network of talented furniture makers who execute company designs using traditional construction techniques. These chairs, tables and more are paired with complementary or identical pieces from other Amish furniture makers, finished to perfection, and then sold under the Simply Amish brand. This network of craftsmen is part of what makes Simply Amish so exceptional. But in 1997, sourcing materials from different places was also exposing the company to risk.

Combating lost revenue and customers

Customers ordering sets of furniture—bedrooms suites, dining sets, etc.—were receiving deliveries of furniture that didn't match. A headboard was a little darker than its footboard. Dining chairs were slightly lighter than their dining table. The result was thousands of dollars in lost revenue and disgruntled Simply Amish customers.

As Finishing Manager at Simply Amish, Ed Sullivan is responsible for making sure the highest quality standards are met and repeated every single day. He began working with Vince Todd, who is now Strategic Account Manager at Accessa, when the company was facing these issues of finish inconsistency. At the time, several different vendors provided Simply Amish with its finishes, and the exact chemical makeup of each vendor's finish was often slightly different.

"We do everything we can to maintain and control the color, so if you buy stains from different vendors, they have to be the same formula," Todd says. "For Simply Amish, we put into place a process to make sure manufacturers were using the exact same finish recipe in five different kitchens to solve this problem."

An ongoing partnership to support growth

Since that first issue was handled, Simply Amish and Accessa have worked together closely to prevent and troubleshoot coatings-related problems, and recognize opportunities to keep the furniture company growing. A great deal of respect is at the foundation of their relationship.

"We've been in business for a long time, and the Amish furniture business has been around many generations," Sullivan says. "We need somebody that will team up and get in a partnership with us because we intend to be here forever. ... It needs to be a lifelong commitment opposed to a week or a month, and we've been able to get that out of Accessa."

"Ed Sullivan is a pioneer in finishing. He goes after new technologies and trends and makes sure they stay ahead of the curve," says Gary Leech, Accessa Coatings Consultant for Simply Amish today. "We work hard to meet every expectation of what a supplier should be, and we help people like Ed feel confident answering why they choose to work with Accessa."

How Simply Amish stays ahead

The ways in which Accessa provides value to Simply Amish are plentiful.

1. **INVENTORY AND SPEED.** So that Simply Amish doesn't have to store many gallons of every color on its production floor at all times—when only a couple gallons are needed on any given day—Accessa maintains an inventory of all its finishes. Simply Amish knows that the Accessa team can get product to their facility fast when something isn't on hand.
2. **BETTER PROCESSES.** Accessa also helps make sure production doesn't slow due to a coating issue or process. When a stain began to produce gritty results, Accessa helped make sure it was ground correctly to achieve a superior finish.
3. **LESS WASTE.** To maximize a coating's coverage area—and cut costs—Accessa offered guidance on humidity and temperature so Simply Amish finishers can finish more wood with less coating.
4. **PRODUCTS THAT PERFORM.** Recently, Accessa introduced an antistatic technology that prohibits dirt or dust from sticking to the finish. They also helped formulate a toner stain that works double duty on hard and soft maple. Leech regularly introduces Sullivan to new products for Simply Amish to consider using, all while keeping prices competitive.

Are these the kinds of challenges you face? If so, contact vtoddjr@accessa.com to start a conversation about how Accessa can be a partner for you.

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