

Middlebury Hardwood Products

Supporting a long-time leader in door manufacturing

The average recreational vehicle has 50 cabinet doors and drawer fronts, so when a consumer is shopping around, that wood has to look and feel great. When RV manufacturers are considering where to focus resources, they know that door quality is at the top of the list.

That's where Middlebury Hardwood Products comes in. Since its founding in 1985, MHP, a division of Patrick Industries, has steadily become a leader in the manufacture and distribution of cabinet doors to the recreational vehicle, manufactured housing and residential kitchen cabinet industries. The RV industry, in particular, is known for its short lead times and high demands.

In order to ramp up production from about 12,000 doors per week in 2006 to 75,000 doors per week in 2014—and 30 color changes—one step in the process was figuring out how to get finished doors stacked and shipped faster. Sean Nolan, Purchasing Manager at MHP, says that during testing, doors were sticking together once they were taken off the production line and stacked.

Keeping the MHP machine moving fast

It was Accessa Coatings Solutions that met MHP's challenge. An MHP finisher can finish the back of a door, stain the front, apply two coats of clear and stack it within 20 minutes, making it possible to get it into a salesman's hands in less than an hour. That kind of performance can only happen with the top-quality stains, sealers and topcoats Middlebury uses.

"It's a fast-moving environment. Nothing stands still, and Accessa is well positioned to keep up," says Dirk de Jong, Accessa's Account Manager for MHP, who has worked with Nolan and his team since 2006. "Logistically, we are partnered at the hip with those guys."

Hands-on service and troubleshooting

De Jong goes to MHP two or three times a week to make sure everything is running smoothly and to find out if he can help solve any issues. Accessa's Strategic Account Manager Vince Todd has worked with MHP for over a decade and supports de Jong in his role, and Accessa's Larry Hilliard is in the MHP shop on a full-time basis to stay on top of production, ongoing color-matching needs and technical troubleshooting.

All three men are always looking for ways MHP might improve. One such opportunity helped MHP cut costs and waste. When MHP finishers were spraying a topcoat on doors and drawers, a certain amount of the material was being scraped off and collected in a bucket to be discarded. Finishers were reusing very little of the excess. With Accessa's help developing a reclaim process, they now reuse every high-quality drop.

Helping MHP be one step ahead

"With a good supplier, we will have a heads up on new finishes, new styles of finishes that come out and new technology. I believe that Accessa does a real good job of trying to bring that to us," says MHP Plant Manager John Ward.

Part of Accessa's consultative service includes keeping a finger on the pulse of the industry. Knowing what direction it is going in terms of design and trends in coatings is critical to helping MHP maintain their position as a leader in their industry.

How MHP stays ahead

- 1. INCREASED EFFICIENCIES.** Finding the right formulation for MHP's finishing materials resulted in a 20 percent increase in weekly production. Recommendations for how to reuse coatings in its spraying process helped MHP reduce its hazardous waste and decrease how much the business spends on coatings.
- 2. INVENTORY SAFETY NET.** Accessa ensures MHP receives finishing materials in a timely manner. And when an unexpected order comes in, Accessa can respond quickly to make sure MHP can keep the equipment running.
- 3. TECHNOLOGY AND TRENDS.** Accessa shares with MHP information from vendors and other sources regarding new technologies, such as the emergence of water-based coatings, and design trends. The hands-on relationship helps make this practice valuable for MHP as the company continues to grow.
- 4. ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE.** As MHP grew and its VOC emissions increased, the company came closer to its restricted limit. Accessa uncovered new formulations that work with MHP's production process and reduced VOC emissions.

Are these the kinds of challenges you face? If so, email vtoddjr@accessa.com to start a conversation with Accessa.

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