

THE CONSULTANCY

SPRING/SUMMER 2024

Silver Linings

TURN THE NEXT DOWNTURN
INTO A PERIOD OF OPPORTUNITY



MEET TEAM ACCESSA'S 'SINKY'
TECH REP JAMES WEDDING



GABE CONNELL TURNED
HIS FAVORITE PIZZA INTO A
THRIVING BUSINESS

Opening Message

Welcome to Accessa



I enjoy the opportunity to touch base and keep everyone informed about trends and changes shaping our industry and how they impact the Accessa landscape. A handful of hot topics that directly impact customers' well-being and our near-term economic

and business conditions are dominating conversations among business leaders today. In this fast-paced industry, staying ahead means not only being aware but also being proactive in our approach.

First and foremost, the **evolving regulatory environment** continues to be a focal point for our business sector. Specifically, we're paying close attention to the topic of solvent-based coatings versus waterborne coatings and the tidal shift we are experiencing. Whether it is the strict clamping down by government and insurance groups on the storage of flammable liquid coatings, air permitting requirements changing for OEMs in many jurisdictions, or simply a desire to be forward thinking by the market, the supply and demand cycle for waterborne coatings has sparked considerable attention. As leaders in our field, it is imperative that Accessa not only adhere to all regulations but also anticipate future developments to ensure the safety of our operations and well-being of our customers.

The **changes in coatings technologies** not only reflect a commitment to sustainability and environmental consciousness but also present both challenges and opportunities for our industry. Understanding and adapting to this shift is paramount, as it directly impacts not only production processes but also the quality and performance of the products,

ultimately influencing customer success and satisfaction. Simply put, the ongoing transition from solvent-based paints to waterborne alternatives is a paradigm shift that cannot be ignored.

In addition to regulatory changes and technological advancements, the **current economic landscape** demands our attention. While market conditions remain fairly positive with strong demand, businesses must navigate carefully in light of continued inflationary pressure, nagging upward costs, geopolitical uncertainties, and the toxic negativity of election-year ads monopolizing our screens. As such, we must remain agile, ready to review our near-term strategic plan and course correct to mitigate risks and capitalize on opportunities. Our ability to stay focused on what we can control, maintain a high level of positivity and accountability, and avoid the "shiny objects" will increase our customers' confidence in us and their overall satisfaction with our products and services.

We will continue to invest in our facilities and the growth of our team to live our promise of supporting our customers and one another. We will also continue to develop positive working relationships with existing and new suppliers to ensure the highest level of product and service integrity, both to Accessa and ultimately the customer base. The importance of developing strong partnerships and collaborations cannot be overstated. As we strive to deliver value to our customers and team, forging alliances with like-minded organizations and suppliers is key to enhancing our capabilities and expanding our reach. In doing so, we can better address customer needs and deliver solutions that set us apart in the market.

On behalf of everyone at Team Accessa, thank you for your continued trust, support and partnership. We look forward to servicing you throughout the remainder of 2024 and beyond.

Sincerely,

Joe Todd

President, Principal



AWI Spring Leadership Conference

The Architectural Woodwork Institute hosted its Spring Leadership Conference at The American Club in Kohler, Wisc., from April 14-16. Team Accessa attended to join other leaders in our industry to foster partnerships and explore new business frontiers.

Wood Pro Expo Illinois

During the two-day expo at Wood Pro Expo Illinois, Team Accessa joined suppliers and other distributors of woodworking machinery and supplies. From our booth and throughout the Wood Pro Expo's bustling hall, we reconnected with contacts and made new ones. These events serve to reinvigorate our team and bring new ideas to our arsenal of solutions. Wood Pro Expo Illinois was held at the Renaissance Hotel & Convention Center in Schaumburg, Ill. *(Pictured are students from Reed-Custer High School who stopped by to thank Chad Purdy for Accessa's continued support. Learn more on page 7.)*



Mt. Hope Showcase

From February 15-17, Accessa reps met peers and customers at the Mt. Hope Showcase in Millersburg, Ohio, where one of our eight branch locations is located. The three-day event featured vendors of all types, including heavy equipment, sawmill, woodworking and construction equipment, and more. *(Pictured are Jason Williamson, Steve Hershberger and Patrick Finn.)*

Daviess County Construction Show

The fourth annual Daviess County Construction Show took place on February 9 and 10 in Odon, Indiana. Team Accessa joined more than 70 other manufacturers and distributors to talk to about 4,250 attendees, ranging from construction professionals and DIYers in the Daviess County area of southwestern Indiana.

Midwest Tool Expo & Auction

The 23rd annual Midwest Tool Expo & Auction in Shipshewana, Indiana, welcomed a sold-out crowd from January 25-27. Accessa was there to talk shop with 14,000+ attendees, including woodworkers, construction professionals and metalworkers. More than 250 vendors attended the event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Come See Us Later This Year!

The Indiana Tooling and Machining Association is again bringing together Indiana manufacturing suppliers and manufacturers for a one-of-a-kind event. On August 22 in Plainfield, Indiana, Team Accessa will be at the **INDIANA MANUFACTURING SUPPLIERS EXPO** to meet other professionals in the manufacturing community.

From October 24-25, Team Accessa will hit **WOOD PRO EXPO LANCASTER** at the Spooky Nook Sports Center in Manheim, Pennsylvania. WPE Lancaster is the only woodworking exposition and conference for professional woodworkers in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast regions. In addition to participation from the strong Pennsylvania woodworking base, attendees come from states including New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, and Massachusetts.

OUTREACH

Make Fit4Heroes Your Wellbeing Booster!



In June, members of Team Accessa will blend philanthropy and camaraderie during a virtual fitness challenge benefiting the Heroes Foundation. Accessa has been a longtime supporter of the Indiana-based Heroes Foundation, whose mission is to provide meaningful **support** to cancer patients, education to promote cancer **prevention** and resources to advance **research** for a cure.

Fit4Heroes, Powered by The Brookfield Group, is one great way we rally our employees around a charitable cause! If you want to participate in this month of fitness and fundraising, visit fit4heroes.org for more information.

THE ACCESSA TEAM ---



Mikey Schlabach Goes to the World Series of Bowling

In April, Accessa-Elkhart employee Mikey Schlabach (shown here with his family) was living out his professional bowling dreams at the Professional Bowlers Association Cheetah Championship in Allen Park, Michigan. From competing in Junior Gold at Thunderbowl Lanes to the World Series of Bowling XV, he had been waiting for this moment. Congratulations, Mikey!

Welcome to Our New Hires



Bailey Matheson

Driver/Warehouse
Hired in November 2023
Arthur, IL



Fernando Del Rio

Coatings Consultant
Hired in December 2023
Chicago, IL



Mike Martin

Lab Technician/Production
Hired in December 2023
Chicago, IL



David Ramos

Coatings Consultant
Hired in December 2023
Chicago, IL



Juan Hernandez

Lab Technician
Hired in November 2023
Denver, CO



Ryan Johnson

Driver/Warehouse/Production Assoc.
Hired in February 2024
Denver, CO



Scott Olson

Lab Technician/Production
Hired in March 2024
Chicago, IL

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT



Indy Is Getting a New Address

Accessa is moving its Indianapolis operations from our circa-1940 industrial space to a historic building in the heart of one of Indianapolis' most walkable sectors: the Mass Ave Cultural District. Built in 1897, the Massala Building is best known for the two-story mural of Kurt Vonnegut painted by Pamela Bliss. While our location on New York Street served us well for many years, Accessa is excited to create more memories and further build our business from this beautifully renovated space. If you're in town, please come see us!

Q-&A With Accessa's James Wedding



James Wedding is Accessa's Technical Coatings Consultant serving Southern Indiana and Kentucky (or "SINKY" as those in the know call the region). Wedding joined Team Accessa in February 2021 and has 34 years

of experience in the wood industry. We are lucky to have him and excited to feature him here!

What do most days look like for you?

Most of the customers I visit are cabinet makers and cabinet shops. Some are mom-and-pop or have as many as 100 people. A 20-30 man shop is the most common. I help with technical questions, color development, troubleshooting, new products and improving efficiency.

Tell us about your professional experience.

I'm a former self-employed cabinet maker. I was a finish and color development manager for some big factories in different divisions: seating, hospitality, kitchen cabinets, executive furniture. I also rebuilt pumps and guns for people. And I've led and managed groups of 40-60 people and trained on operations skills like Lean and Kaizen.

What do you enjoy most about your job at Accessa?

Accessa believes in great service. I've always tried to have the mindset of *Whatever it takes, you just do it* so Accessa is a great fit for me. My role with Accessa allows me to use the different skill sets I've gained over the years in the finish world, tie it all into one, and just go out and help the customers. It's my way of giving back. Accessa offers very high-end quality products at a competitive price, so when you know you have a good product, it's an easy sell.

What are some of the challenges you help solve?

A broad range of questions and things come up. Every shop is different. Finish is finish, but one process doesn't work for everyone because of how they're set up. It might be as simple as finding the source of dirt. Or there might

be a pulse in the equipment that's making lines in the finish. There are so many factors — atomization, viscosity, flow rate. All of that is key to having a good product. If you're off on any of those things, even if you have a superior product, you won't have a very appealing finish.

What I really hang my hat on is developing a user-friendly color that's part of a repeatable process. We collect data to prove out theories, so if you have a failure, you try to recreate that defect to see if it lines up with your data. A lot of the time, you can put a change in place in your PM (preventive maintenance) to solve the problem. It's about being proactive to prevent the defect from happening again.



James Wedding enjoys spending time with family, including his seven grandchildren.

Can you share a little about your life outside of work?

Sure. I have a wife of 34 years, three daughters and seven grandchildren. When my daughters were young, I coached some of their teams, like softball, soccer, cheer, track, cross-country, and volleyball.

Today, I enjoy spending time with family, woodworking, and supporting my grandkids in their sports events. You go through different stages of life. Our parents are up in their years now. I find myself helping them quite a bit.

I heard you live in Owensboro, Kentucky. What do you love about living there?

It's the Bluegrass State, a beautiful state. I like Bluegrass music, horses, bourbon, that Southern hospitality, the four seasons. Fall is my favorite time of the year. Some call it "Big Blue Nation" for our basketball. I kind of stir the pot a bit but I don't get too excited when they get beat. I just laugh at those guys.



Reed-Custer High School Students Win Top Prize



These Reed-Custer High School students (photo at left) won a national award for a kitchen project. Students begin the Industrial Technology program by making longboard-style skateboards.

For 24 years, students at Reed-Custer High School in Braidwood, Illinois, have relied on Accessa to provide them with high-quality finishes for their classroom. Mark Smith leads Industrial Technology at RCHS, where kids have made everything from guitars to longboards. The program included seventy students in the spring 2024 semester.

Students must take Orientation to Technology before progressing to more advanced classes such as CAD/CAM, 3-D Printing and Production. In 2023, Production students used Accessa post-catalyzed varnish on a residential kitchen cabinet project that won a national competition hosted by Castle, the well-known manufacturer of pocket-cutting machines.

Reed-Custer students coming out of Smith's program have secured internships and jobs thanks in part to the experiences and skills they acquired in class. Graduate Nathan Minuth interned with the Association of Woodworking & Furniture Suppliers and is now attending Pittsburg State University pursuing his master's degree focused on the wood industry. Seth Billingsley recently interned at Brakur Custom Cabinetry in Shorewood, Illinois. Emory Luth built an oval table in high school and interned at Andersen Windows at age 17. He graduated as his class's valedictorian and then took a second internship at Andersen to lead a research project.

Accessa is proud to support the hardworking, talented students at Reed-Custer High School. They are the future of our industry. Go Comets!



Not All Tools Are the Sames



Did you know that Accessa carries Sames brand spray guns and pumps? For nearly a century, Sames has provided services and equipment for the application of liquid and powder paints, adhesives and sealants to bond, protect and beautify all kinds of surfaces.

At Accessa, we have tested Sames manual guns, sprayers, dispensers, pumps and dosing machines and stand behind these innovative products. Sames is often the best choice for our demanding customers. Plus, Sames is respectful of the environment.



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Sanding brushes

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20"x25"
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Times of Opportunity

It can be challenging when business is slow. In the worst of circumstances, it can lead to job losses, downsizing, and decreases in productivity. However, a slowdown is also a time of opportunity for companies to address the pains they have been facing. Let's look at the opportunities.

MORE TIME TO ADDRESS PAIN POINTS

Most companies have some form of pain, but they often live with it when production is high because they don't have time to address it. When things are slower, they have more time on their hands. This presents an opportunity for both the company and vendors that might have a solution for their pain.

INCREASED COMPETITIVENESS

Companies can get comfortable when the economy is booming, and innovation can take a backseat. However, during an economic slowdown, companies are forced to innovate to remain competitive. This is an opportunity for entrepreneurs to create new products or services that help businesses save money or increase efficiency.

LOWER COSTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

During an economic slowdown, businesses may experience lower costs, such as lower interest rates, lower raw material costs and lower labor costs. Now might be the best time to invest in new businesses or to expand their existing business. Additionally, there is an opportunity to acquire assets or businesses that may have been unattainable during a robust economy.

INCREASED CONSUMER FOCUS

When there is an economic slowdown, consumers become more value-driven to get the most value for their money. This creates an opportunity for entrepreneurs to offer products or services that are not only affordable but also high-quality. Businesses that can offer high-quality products or services at a reasonable price are more likely to succeed during an economic slowdown.

By embracing the opportunity presented by an economic slowdown, businesses can position themselves for success in the long term.

How Sales Can Handle Downtime



You may need to adjust your typical day to stay engaged and challenged when you aren't as busy as usual. Kevin Fine is Accessa's Sales & Business

Development Manager serving eastern U.S. markets. Here are his tips for making progress when the market is soft.

Prospect! Knock on some doors and say hello. When you have the time, it's critical to stay engaged with other companies to see what they are up to. You may be there at the right time to solve a problem.

Train on products. There is no better time to practice your craft. Trial a product you are less familiar with. Put it through its paces so that you are confident in your presentation when someone is looking for it.

Start conversations with current customers about other products you offer. The people you work with appreciate being updated on the latest products you offer. It's always good to spread the knowledge.

Review your sales data. With a clear head and a cup of coffee, you may spot some opportunities calling out to you in those numbers!

Get inspired. Read a book on the industry, find a business documentary, watch a great movie or listen to Accessa's Industrious Podcast. It will help you recharge and maybe give you some pointers you can use in the field.

Engage on social media. Make posts highlighting a unique project. "Talk" to business friends. Stay active — those points of contact could yield benefits.

FROM THE INDUSTRIOUS PODCAST

Gabe Connell Turned His Favorite Pizza Into a Thriving Business



On The Industrious Podcast, Vince and Joe Todd talk to interesting people across business sectors knowing that we

can all learn from other industries. We loved this interview with Gabe Connell. Watch the full interview on The Industrious Podcast. Find us on [YouTube](#) or wherever you get your podcasts.

Gabe Connell always knew he wanted to start his own business, but for years, he had no idea what kind it would be. Today his HotBox Pizza company has 23 Indiana locations.

Connell was raised in Chicago until age 12 when his father was promoted from garbageman to a managerial position in St. Louis. After graduation from Indiana University, he took a sales job for BLACK+DECKER in Louisville, Kentucky. When he got transferred to Columbus, Ohio, Connell's girlfriend, Michelle, suggested he reach out to her uncle and aunt who lived there. When he pulled up to their house for the first time, he was baffled. It was a mansion.

"I thought her uncle just owned a couple of skating rinks, but he was actually a very successful serial entrepreneur," Connell said. Michelle's uncle, Norman Traeger, was generous with his business acumen, too. "One time he asked me what I wanted to do with my life, and I told him I wanted to own my own business. He said, 'Great. How are you going to do that?' And I had no idea. No clue. I thought I was just going to wake up one day and start my own company."

It was a lightbulb moment for Connell, so he went to work for Traeger. "I still know nothing about roller skating, but I learned how to drive revenue, control expenses and develop people — all the things that go into running a small company."

When the general manager of an Indianapolis rink resigned, Connell took over. He helped increase profits, and they gave him another rink to run. Eventually, the partners worked out a lease agreement that gave Connell his first taste of business ownership. He was just 26 years old.

"It was a great experience," he says. "The big takeaway was that I had to find something that I love doing. I was never in love with the skating business. I hit a point where I started thinking about what I would want 20 or 50 or 100 of, and I thought of the pizza business."

Connell had a taste of nostalgia for Pizza Express, one of his favorite spots in Bloomington. Pizza Express, now called Pizza X, has delivered Bloomington's favorite pizza since 1982. After their IU days were over, Gabe and Michelle, who eventually married, would drive over an hour from Indianapolis to Bloomington just to get pizza and breadsticks.

Connell recalls how, during a marketing class at IU, he and his peers had been asked to research a brand with a cult following. While other students studied Apple and Nike, Connell talked to the owners of Pizza Express.

"I wondered why they were just in Bloomington when they could follow IU graduates and open stores where they went, and their response was that they're a Bloomington company. They owned several brands in Bloomington. They were ingrained there," Connell says.

In 2004, when Connell knew his calling was pizza, he signed a license agreement to use the Pizza Express name and opened his first few stores. When he rebranded his shops in 2006, they asked customers for name suggestions. Employees narrowed the list of hundreds to just six names, and customers voted on a favorite. The clear winner was HotBox Pizza. (Michelle's favorite, Wacky Jackie's Pizza Shack, didn't make the cut.)



Gabe and Michelle Connell's daughters Isabelle and Ava helped out by folding pizza boxes when they were little.

Connell's original business plan was to bring HotBox to Indianapolis first and then grow into other college markets. They opened shops near IUPUI and Butler University in Indianapolis, and Purdue University in West Lafayette. But when nonstudents started ordering HotBox, he pivoted.

He recalls a night when he was making deliveries from the Broad Ripple store in Indianapolis. When the first customer answered his door, Connell peeked inside to see a group of college guys playing video games. At the

next address, in an affluent area of town, a man in his mid-40s had ordered HotBox.

"It hit me. Just because people get older and move to the suburbs or have kids doesn't mean they have a completely different vision of themselves. They still identify with the same brands," Connell says. "In his mind, that man was still the guy hanging out with his buddies playing Xbox." A new market presented itself, and HotBox followed.

Today, HotBox has seven company stores and 16 franchise locations, and Connell plans to continue to pursue steady, sustainable growth. His secrets to success aren't really secrets at all. He tries to stay connected to every level of the HotBox team by bringing value to them, not micromanaging anyone. He embraces servant leadership. Training is a top priority.

Connell also appreciates the speed and abundance of feedback customers provide online through pictures and reviews. His Director of Marketing responds to customers and when it's necessary, the Director of Operations takes negative feedback back to the store level to prevent a mistake from happening again.

Connell has built a robust family business. All three of his children have worked at HotBox, starting very young with unpaid jobs like cleaning out the mop buckets. Now they are pursuing their own interests including education, business, accounting and finance.

"They would make a great team together, but I want them to do their own thing," Connell says. "It's not their job to be my succession plan. If they get to a point where they say, hey we love the company and want to come back and add value, we'll have that conversation."

COMING SOON



Your Home for Professional Cabinet Refinishing

Cabinet refinishers will be able to get the tools, paint products, tips and technical expertise they need to make every project a winner with **Accessa Marketplace Solutions**. Follow Accessa on social media to find out when we go live!



Investing in Ourselves Serves All

By Les Yoder, Accessa Operations Manager

As we stride into a new quarter, it's imperative to highlight the strategic investments we've made in our operations. With a keen eye on efficiency and quality, we are directing resources towards upgrading our production and lab equipment. These investments not only bolster our capabilities but also ensure that we maintain the highest standards in product quality.

In tandem with upgrading equipment, we're expanding our team to better serve customers. Hiring new members with diverse skill sets and experiences enables us to provide more comprehensive support tailored to our customers' needs. Our focus on customer satisfaction remains unwavering, and new additions to our team reflect Accessa's commitment to delivering exceptional service. With a dedicated workforce, we're better positioned to address challenges swiftly and ensure that our clients receive the attention and solutions they deserve.

At the heart of our operations lies a dedication to excellence. We understand the importance of not only meeting but also exceeding customer expectations. Therefore, our investments and expansions are aligned with this ethos. By enhancing our production capabilities, augmenting our team, and maintaining a relentless focus on quality and lead times, we're poised for continued success. As we embark on this journey together, let's reaffirm our commitment to operational excellence and customer satisfaction, driving our company towards even greater heights.

Accessa Available Positions

Do you know someone who would be a great fit for Team Accessa? Please send them our way. Job descriptions are available on the Careers section of our website (accessa.com/careers). Candidates can send a resume to jobs@accessa.com.

- **Chemicals Consultant – Illinois, Wisconsin, Western Indiana**
- **Coatings Consultant – SINKY (So. Indiana and Kentucky)**
- **Coatings Consultant – Pennsylvania**
- **Coatings Consultant – Michigan**
- **Technical Coatings Consultant – Michigan**

THE INDUSTRIOUS PODCAST

The Podcast Built for Industrious People Like You

Do you have a road trip ahead? Want to hear inspiring interviews with people you can relate to? Check out The Industrious Podcast! Co-hosts Vince and Joe Todd invite guests into the studio for honest conversations that can get gritty and sometimes off-topic but are always entertaining and informative.

Listen to The Industrious Podcast through Spotify, the iTunes app or wherever you get your podcasts, or find us on [YouTube](#).



EPISODE 45

Pete Ward, Indianapolis Colts

The Colts' COO has been with the team since 1981. Hear his perspective on the iconic Tony Dungy, the Peyton Manning years, and more.



EPISODE 44

Nathan Feltman, IBJ Media

Hear about this leader's path, from practicing law in Russia and the U.S., to supporting Governor Mitch Daniels' campaign, to leading IBJ.



EPISODE 43

Kevin Flynn, CVR

Separate the trends from the constants in marketing and business, and hear how AI is changing the marketing/advertising industry.



EPISODE 42

Milind and Sunjay Agtey, Nimbello

Leaders of an accounts payable automation platform talk career shakeups and the value of betting on yourself.



EPISODE 41

2023 Year in Review

Vince and Joe welcome you to the year of #morein24 and a recap of 2023, including market fluctuations and increased infrastructure.



EPISODE 40

Brooke Crosley, Crosley, Inc.

Learn strategies for business leaders to strengthen their emotional presence for the benefit of their organization.

EPISODE 46: Get a preview of the guys' interview with HotBox Pizza founder Gabe Connell on page 10.

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