

Flexibility first

Trim and door manufacturer implements speed, reduced labor and environmental safety for a multitude of tasks

By Brooke Baldwin
Wisdom

Before Superior Trim & Door, Inc. decided to create its own millwork department, the 20-year-old, Apopka, FL-based trim and door manufacturer was trimming its doors with a table saw and outsourcing all of its specialty millwork. The new department now houses equipment that provides flexibility, increased speed, labor reduction and environmental safety.

Superior Trim & Door makes its doors out of fiberglass, plastic and hardwood. A decision to buy a Raimann FlexiRip Universal Sawing Center turned out to be the solution to several challenges. "At first we were thinking about getting a gang rip saw, but decided on the Raimann FlexiRip because it gave us so much more flexibility as far as cutting different materials," explains Carl Miller, millwork manager. "What's nice about the FlexiRip is that it is completely enclosed and has its own dust collection. When we were cutting on a standard table saw, we used to have to suit up two guys in white suits along with masks to avoid inhalation of fiberglass dust. That's been eliminated. Also, the actual process to cut down a couple of doors took about 30 minutes. Now we do it in less than five minutes. Another thing the FlexiRip has done for us concerns thickness. A regular table saw's blade goes up about 3". On the FlexiRip, we can get up to 6", so it doubles the thickness. We can cut three doors stacked on one another."

A multitude of tasks

Because of the ease of operation and multitude of tasks that can be carried out on the FlexiRip, other operators in the plant are using the FlexiRip to cut a variety of jobs,



In addition to flexibility, the Raimann FlexiRip Universal Sawing Center has brought the time it takes to cut down doors from 30 minutes to less than five minutes for Apopka, FL-based Superior Trim & Door.

such as ripping/moulding blanks, ripping MDF sheets and ripping plastic sheets. "Our plastic comes in 17' pieces, and the FlexiRip can handle cuts up to 17' 6", says Miller. "Cutting 17' long plastic on it saves us a lot of time. Also, it used to take two men on the table saw to cut the plastic. This takes one man. That's a big difference. For cutting long lumber, such as 16' lumber, you only need one man on the FlexiRip. On the table saw you need two."

Miller praises another feature of the FlexiRip — optimization. "Say we have a 4' x 8' sheet of plywood and need a certain number of 3" rips, 2" rips and 5" rips," he explains. "I can send that cutlist to the FlexiRip, and it will tell me whether or not I can get it out of that sheet. It panel optimizes for you. It also has fixed parameters. Since a lot of our material is always the same size, I have all those sizes already programmed in it so an operator just has to hit the fixed parameter button to punch in the number. That makes for less error and also saves time."

No more outsourcing

Superior Trim & Door was outsourcing all of its specialty millwork such as crown molding, base molds and chair rails before it established its millwork department, says Miller. "Three of our biggest clients are very high-end home builders who build houses priced at \$3 million and up," he says. "Of course, they request that all custom-built work be put into their homes. Also, the doors and entryways are usually one-of-a-kind products. Before we bought our Weinig Unimat Gold moulder, we were pretty much limited to what our suppliers could provide us."

Custom Shop

“Now with the Unimat Gold and the Rondamat 960, we can grind our own knives. Along with our Komo CNC router, we can cut out our own templates. Basically, we can design any type of molding — any profile anybody wants. If we want to match something, we are usually within .004” — that’s pretty close. We keep a library of those profiles in our computer and also in our own grinding room, which we call the cave, where we keep all the profiles up on the wall. Everything is marked and noted. Additionally, a Mikron radius moulder enables us to do radius moldings to match our straight moldings.”

David Buzzella, vice president and general manager of the company, points out that the millwork department has only five employees. “When you consider that before we purchased this high-tech equipment, we would need a minimum of 15 employees to perform these tasks, we’ve cut labor costs tremendously, while increasing our profit margin,” he notes. Typical production volume is 300 doors a day as far as multi-family and residential projects go. Fiberglass makes up five percent of the volume, metal is 25 percent and then the rest is hardwood. “We use pine, mahogany, oak, cherry, some pressure treated and maple,” Miller says. “We’ve cut 4” maple on that saw, and because of the horsepower of the motor, it doesn’t drag one bit.”

The millwork department cuts its door blanks 1/8” bigger on the FlexiRip and then uses its KOMO CNC router to cut these parts to size. “I use autoCAD for most of my drawings and then RouterCim takes it to the CNC router,” says Miller. “On a set of doors, typical turnaround time is usually six weeks because most of our work is custom, and it’s basically a matter of inventing how you are going to produce a set of doors. When new designs are brought in, a lot of the challenge is in how they are going to be built, but we basically use the same types of glue and dowel construction. We use stile and rail, and then we run dowels inside.”

Miller is especially proud of a trim he developed for the company’s multi-family projects, which is made possible by the KOMO CNC router. “I call it an ‘All-in-One,’” he says. “It is a rosette with the fluting and then a plinth block below, and it is all in one piece. What people have normal-



Top: With the Unimat Gold and the Rondamat 960, Superior Trim & Door can produce or match any profile and no longer has to be limited to what specialty millwork its suppliers could provide.

Bottom: Carl Miller, millwork manager at Superior Trim & Door, has developed his “All-in-One” doorframe trim with the help of a KOMO CNC router.

ly had to do was buy the plinth block separately from the fluted casing and then have a rosette. Three pieces actually had to be cut and nailed in. What I’ve done with the CNC is made it all one piece. You install an “All-in-One” on each side of the doorframe and then headers are made to go across the top. So you’re installing three pieces instead of seven. It cuts your workload down. Our installation crew has been ranting and raving about that one.” **MW**

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