

# Made-to-Order Manufacturing

## Barker Cabinets caters to do-it-yourself Customers with the help of Cabinet Vision

Channel surfing at any given time on any day will tell you all you need to know about the health of the do-it-yourself trend: It remains alive and well.

From one-room paint jobs to the installation of flooring and even plumbing, avid DIY-ers range from the casual to the diehard.

Catering to those independent home improvers is Barker Cabinets, a Tualatin, Oregon-based cabinet company that provides high-quality products designed and assembled by its clientele.

“Customers say, ‘I love my kitchen. I put this together,’ ” says CEO Chad Barker. “Having them get their hands on the design, they really understand the whole process and how something should be designed. The customers are much more invested because they are a part of the process.”

The company began performing custom design and installation upon its inception in 1978, but has since transitioned to a business model that entails website-based custom design performed by its customers.

“Anything we do is custom made. We build it to order,” Barker says. “We offer 40 different varieties of base cabinets, so they can choose the cabinet they want and customize it from there.”

That customization can include the addition of rollout and pullout drawers and shelving, changes in product widths and materials, and more. Because there is no overhead involved in creating a concept, the company is free to design and post new products online to gauge potential customer demand.

“It’s fun; the best thing about what we do is the ultimate freedom,” Barker says. “A lot of times, the customer designs it. They can say, ‘I want this type of cabinet,’ and in 48 hours it can be up on the website. You can put something up and provide something that customers can really get behind.”

In the mid 1980s, Barker Cabinets acquired the Cabinet Vision design-to-manufacturing solution to support its design and operational processes. In 2000, the company implemented CNC



### About The Company:

Name: Barker Cabinets

Business: Custom cabinetry

Website: [barkercabinets.com](http://barkercabinets.com)

### Benefits Achieved:

- Greater efficiency
- Custom programming for a production environment
- Automation for greater productivity

### Comments:

*“Cabinet Vision is the hub of our business. We wouldn’t be able to produce anything without it — and there is no way we could go back to doing what we did in the 80s and stay competitive.”*

**Chad Barker**  
CEO

machinery — an effort spearheaded by retired company co-founder Bruce Barker, Chad Barker's father.

With the newly integrated Morbidelli routers, the necessity of Cabinet Vision grew ever more apparent.

"Cabinet Vision is the hub of our business," Barker says. "We wouldn't be able to produce anything without it — and there is no way we could go back to doing what we did in the 80s and stay competitive."

While Bruce Barker is an avid woodworker of the traditional variety, Chad Barker — a former business major who had initially foreseen a career in finance — is passionate about the technological aspects of modern woodworking.

"One of the most fun aspects of the job is that we're starting from scratch with everything that we make," says Barker, who oversees all of the company's CNC programming. "I could do stuff on a CNC in 10 minutes that it would take a master woodworker much longer to make."

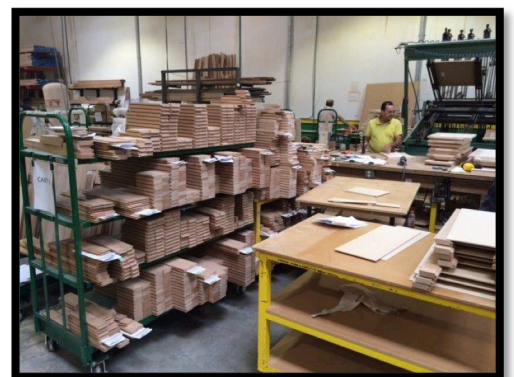
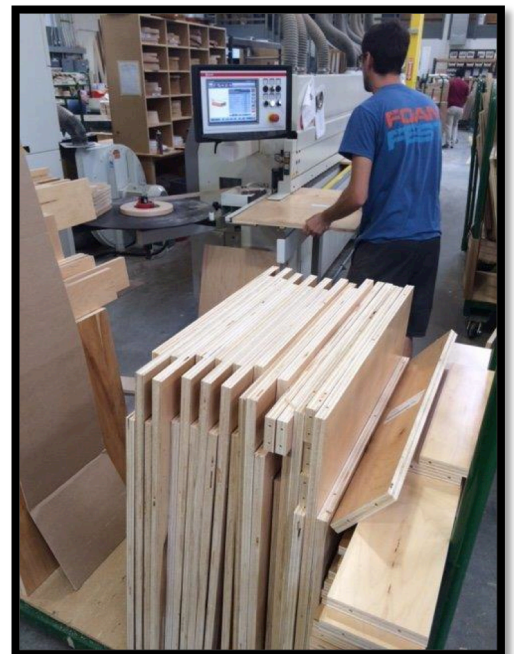
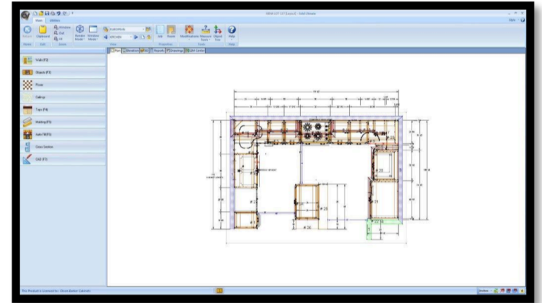
As the company evolved and ultimately became Internet-based, its overarching goal was to become a production business without sacrificing any of the quality that made it a customer favorite.

"We've kept the standards that we had and kept the quality while making it into a production company," Barker says. "If customers can get that high-end production at low-cost, the only downside is that we're busy."

Because the work is custom and never entails focusing on a single product, the work is diverse and part of the challenge of production is in juggling multiple design elements.

To make Barker Cabinets' custom products, five employees devoted entirely to layout are on the ready to input measurements for customer orders. Finished programs are sent to the machine tools, where pieces are cut and reach the doorsteps of clients in 40-45 days from the date of order.

To save time, ensure quality, and make certain that the pieces are cut in accordance with the company's construction methods, Barker takes advantage of Cabinet Vision's User Created Standards, or UCSs, which allow the automation of specific processes.



Written in basic “if/then” statements, the UCSs are easy to both use and apply and are tailored to the unique needs of the company. Those processes may relate to, for instance, using a specific method to cut a particular type of material. The ability to modify a part or operation, add or link a part or operation, or delete a part or operation, are the three most common types of UCSs.

“There are certain things that every skilled woodworker can do. On the software we use, we can program a circle and have the CNC cut it out in 5 minutes,” Barker says.

“It’s taking that craftsmanship and applying it with a modern advantage.”

Barker has utilized Cabinet Vision’s flexibility to help create a construction method that is wholly unique to Barker Cabinets.

“Our construction method is different from anyone else’s,” he says. “No one else does it like us. There are certain things about the way our cabinets are done that works better for CNC.”

While Barker Cabinets has embraced the productivity inherent to CNC machining, it doesn’t scrimp on materials as production continues to increase. The plywood that the company uses is made in Oregon and the company that makes it is just down the street.

“We can visit the manufacturer and talk to them,” Barker says.

Barker Cabinets currently employs 45 people and is continuing to hire, as “we are always increasing capacity.”

Its focus on customer service remains at the forefront, as evidenced by the company website, which is loaded with “how-tos.”

Each section of the website includes detailed installation information, including images and video tutorials, as well as pictures of necessary hardware and tools. It also includes information on how to measure for drawers, rollouts, and other custom pieces.

“The tutorials on the website take them through the procedure and helps them visualize what’s going on,” Barker says. “We’re here to help, and that’s part of our success.”

