

Diversifying for the Long Haul

With Cabinet Vision on its Side, FADCO Increases Production by Tenfold

Eyes working overtime beneath the brim of a ball cap, Mark Mirdo scans his monitor from an office untouched by the chill of autumn in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

"I like solving problems," says Mirdo, head engineer for the Fixtures & Drywall Company of Oklahoma, Inc. — or FADCO — a business that specializes in the design, production and installation of premium-grade architectural millwork products. Among millwork performed by FADCO are the production of wall panels, radius custom desks, and cabinets.

Somewhat unfortunately for Mirdo, he and the 70-member crew at FADCO don't seem to have many problems to solve.

Founded in 1980 by President Bob Vincent, the business that debuted as a small drywall and millwork outfit has thrived in large part due to Vincent's willingness to embrace new technologies.

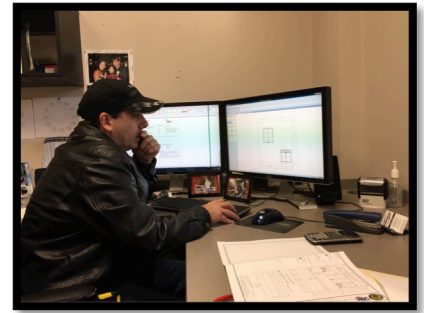
The bulk of FADCO's investment in the cutting edge amounts to high-quality equipment and the software that drives it. Acquired by FADCO in 1984, the Cabinet Vision computer-aided-manufacturing (CAM) solution by Vero Software has empowered the company to produce premium cabinets while diversifying its customer base.

"I've tried to keep up with all the latest technology, whatever it be," Vincent says, his quietly unassuming manner belying a knack for blazing trails to true success. "Cabinet Vision has allowed us to increase production tenfold over where we started. We couldn't do what we do today without that."

Today, what FADCO does is tackle an increasingly diverse range of commercial projects. While those projects take place primarily within Oklahoma, it does a fair amount of business in Kansas, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, and beyond.

While production varies, FADCO's two shifts on routers and saws work their way through about 200 sheets of material each day. It also garners a great deal of business in solid-surface manufacturing.

Among its mechanical workforce are two solid-surfacing ovens, a miter-fold machine, a panel saw, a contour edgebander, a nested-based CNC router, and a point-to-point router. A 5-axis router is on Vincent's wish list for the future.



About The Company:

Name: FADCO, Inc.

Business: Premium architectural mill-work

Website: fadco.com

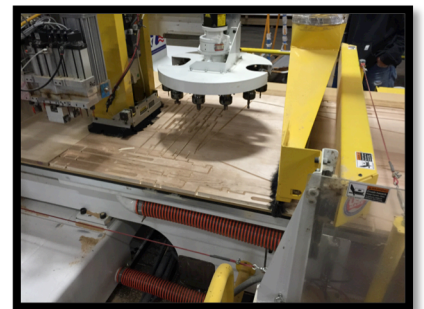
Benefits Achieved:

- Ease of Diversification
- Process Customization
- Increased Productivity

Comments:

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Bob Vincent
President



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cabinet vision

“Anything that has wood or plastic laminate, we can do,” Vincent says. “We’re always looking to be diversified. The more diversified you are, the longer you’ll be around.”

From Screen to Machine: Where Art Meets Science

Populated by drawings of cabinets tacked neatly next to family photos, Mirdo’s office is a modern cabinet-maker’s laboratory, a place where recipes for greater efficiency are ceaselessly cultivated.

When Mirdo and his team embark upon a new project, the first item on their to-do list is determining how an architect’s specs will hold up in the real world. “By what’s drawn, it either works or won’t work,” Mirdo says. “If we see something that won’t work, we try to design it to where it will.”

With 17 years of custom-shop experience and eight years of Cabinet Vision programming under his belt, Mirdo knows just how to mix the art and science of production.

To create a program in Cabinet Vision, Mirdo begins by creating a virtual room that mirrors the real-life dimensions of the room in which the cabinets will be installed.

Because Cabinet Vision offers a live 3D virtual environment, changes made to the dimensions of the room or to the project specs are automatically made to any live drawings.

“We use the live drawing feature, which was an awesome [Cabinet Vision] upgrade that saves a lot of time — not having to regenerate your drawing,” Vincent says.

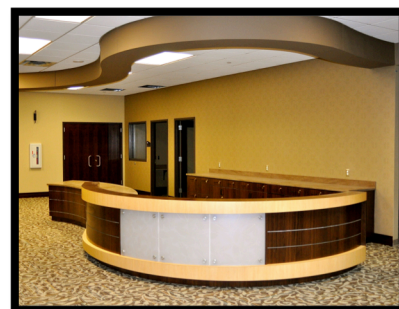
Another Cabinet Vision feature widely utilized by FADCO is the software’s ability to easily incorporate Cabinet Vision User-Created Standards, or UCSs. UCSs are exactly what their moniker describes: standards written by users in Cabinet Vision scripting language to tell the software very specifically what they would like it to do.

Written with IF/THEN statements, UCSs are worth the investment of time they take to establish, as they quickly add up to significant production gains on the shop floor, Mirdo says.

“It’s so modifiable,” he says of programming with user-created standards. “It doesn’t just add something to Cabinet Vision, but cuts down on processes that we do in engineering.”

Mirdo has penned a library of UCSs that increase efficiency by, among other things, assigning filters to certain part types.

For instance, one of Mirdo’s UCSs instructs the software to ignore the grain of a specific material under certain conditions.



This can be especially helpful when working with nested-based routers that maximize materials while cutting production time.

Even without the use of UCSs, Mirdo has found that Cabinet Vision contains helpful built-in intelligence that simplifies programming. The ability to select materials and designs from a Cabinet Vision catalogue based upon FADCO's experience is a benefit for the whole team.

"There's a lot of intelligence included in Cabinet Vision that I can incorporate, and I try to take advantage of that whenever I can," Mirdo says. "When I put something in Cabinet Vision and it's not something we've done before, I try to write equations and add parameters available in Cabinet Vision in order to leave the product with some intelligence so that if one of my guys out here programs it to the shop, they can easily adjust it."

On display in Vincent's office are awards bestowed upon FADCO by the Associated Builders and Contractors (ABC) of Oklahoma, Inc. In the past decade, the company has been awarded nine ABC trophies for excellence in construction; one of the nine was handed down at the national level.

Not bad at all for a company with modest beginnings that now counts among its projects Tulsa's recently unveiled \$206 million Saint Francis Hospital tower, as well as the Tulsa Technology Center.

"Being at the hospital, you kind of get lost because everything is the same," Mirdo says of FADCO's work on the 150-bed patient tower and trauma center. "When you see the different colors at the reception desks, you know where you are."

The hospital project entailed the manufacturing and installation of solid-surface covered and Lumicor backlit paneled desks on seven tower floors, while FADCO took care of the wainscoting, trim and stain for the Tulsa Technology Center, in Owasso, Oklahoma.

"What used to take me two weeks to do I can do in one day with Cabinet Vision," Vincent says. "You just can't make a living these days without these machines and software."

