



### **Good ideas come from discussions with members**

Birdseye Building Company is an architectural design and building company found in Richmond, VT. The company also does woodwork and metalwork, landscape construction, site development, and customized property services. Johnathan Schumacher runs the woodshop portion of the company. The woodshop does millwork and makes interior products like cabinets for the building portion of the business, but also makes pieces for other contractors and individual clients. The business began in 1984 with two partners who sought to simply build quality homes. They came to realize that they needed a woodshop for their business, so they eventually bought one but came to sell it. As the business grew Birdseye bought the woodshop back and added the architectural aspect of their businesses with added construction capabilities.

As was previously mentioned while being part of Birdseye Building the woodshop does a great deal of independent work. The woodshop does not overtly market since they are highly specialized. Customers usually come to them with ideas or requests for the kinds of work they are looking for. The bulk of their work is cabinetry, but they also make unique furniture pieces which Johnathan described as “outside-the-box.” He said, “We do things no one else would touch,” bringing to life the ideas for pieces that customers have. Their work has been featured in publications before, most recently in *New England Home*.

Birdseye took a hit initially from the Coronavirus pandemic when they were closed during the shutdowns. Johnathan said they did not lose customers; they just could not continue the work they were doing. It was a slow build back when workers returned, but now they are in good shape. In fact, they are busier than ever according to Johnathan, although he said they are not as efficient as before since the added regulations slow down the process.

The Woodshop has implemented Coronavirus guidelines like wearing masks and keeping distance as they work together. With workers using the same equipment much of time, they have been wiping down the equipment after each use. Their work often requires the builders to spend time in customer’s homes for construction or installation purposes so the required precautions are taken when that is needed. A challenge to the new guidelines is a lack of social interaction that normally accompanies the job. Johnathan spoke highly of the culture of Birdseye and having to sit alone when eating lunch, for example, is an unfortunate side effect of the new guidelines. The woodshop has 10 employees and they have been cooperative in adjusting to the new guidelines.

The pandemic has not led to any new infrastructure needs for the woodshop or the rest of Birdseye. Customers appear to be shopping for similar items as before the pandemic also.

However, Birdseye has been experiencing some supply chain problems. It takes them longer to get materials for their projects, and sometimes they are not even available. Johnathan has found them to be more expensive than before the pandemic too. This is one of the main takeaways Birdseye has learned from the pandemic. Being more aware of supply chains and understanding that all industries involved in their work are impacted in some way will help them be more prepared in the future.

Birdseye Building Company has been in the VWWC since it was called the Vermont Wood Manufacturers Association. As an employee for 15 years, Johnathan feels Birdseye brings an understanding of larger organizations to the council. Birdseye is a larger company itself with multiple departments, so it has experience problem solving in a larger group setting. Johnathan said that this experience is beneficial in helping the smaller businesses in the council relate to the larger ones. Johnathan finds the networking and updates on the industry that the VWWC provides very beneficial. They help him and Birdseye better understand the challenges of Vermont wood companies and also determine ways to address and solve the problems. He said, “Good ideas come from discussions with members.” He also said the information from members that are a part of other organizations, brings some helpful information as well. While Johnathan, like others, looks forward to getting back together in person again, he said Birdseye Building is willing to help other members with anything.