



### **Finding Good Employees and Treating them Properly**

Appalachian Engineered Flooring (AEF) produces hardwood engineered flooring. Using birch, maple, hickory, red and white oak woods, Appalachian Flooring creates several unique collections of flooring with different colors, grades, glosses, and other qualities. The Engineered Flooring Company is located in North Troy, Vermont and has been in operation since 2011. It is the sister company of Appalachian Flooring located in Cowansville, Quebec, Canada, which has been in operation since 2000. All the flooring AEF makes is sent to the business in Quebec where it undergoes a finishing process. From there the flooring is sold throughout Canada and the United States.

Pascal Beaulieu is part of the leadership of AEF. Like many other businesses, AEF was shut down for several weeks at the beginning of Covid-19. Pascal said that after reopening, business was slower, but has now returned to pre-Covid production levels. The only business changes that have occurred at AEF since reopening have been the implementation of social distancing and state mandated Coronavirus restrictions. All 25 employees have been cooperative with the new guidelines. The company has not experienced any supply chain issues to date nor changed their products in any way. The company did feel the need to add a second restroom for men to limit the use of shared spaces.

An issue that has arisen from the pandemic for AEF is the difficulty finding employees. Like other woodwork businesses, AEF is in need of more employees but has had difficulty finding workers experienced in the trade. The pandemic has further aggravated this problem because people are receiving money from unemployment and would rather stay home and keep receiving that than go back to work. Said Pascal, "People are no longer required to perform job searches while on unemployment, making things very difficult for many employers in the area."

For AEF, the pandemic has not taught them new lessons, but rather highlighted lessons already learned. The company has always adhered to finding good employees and treating them properly so they desire to remain with the business. With the upheaval that the pandemic has caused within the workforce of many industries, AEF is more determined to keep their employees happy so the work continues and AEF will be known as an attractive place to work. As Pascal stated, "We already knew that keeping good employees is the key to success before the pandemic. Covid has just reinforced that knowledge."

Pascal listed quality and efficiency as two of Appalachian Engineered Flooring's strengths. He said, "We really care about our product. For us, quality is everything; we always find ways to improve our product." AEF works hard to reduce waste within the company. The waste we do produce is turned into sawdust and sold to local farmers for animal bedding. Whether in their production, sourcing, or daily operations AEF seeks to be efficient and environmentally friendly. Pascal said that AEF is willing to share this and other expertise with other VWWC members. The networking that comes through being a member of the VWWC is important to Pascal and the company and part of why the business joined the Council. "The Wood industry is a challenging business," said Pascal, "You never know when you are going to need help from someone. I find it's good to make great contacts within the industry."