

Best Practices

“Green” to the Core

By Devon Martin, vice president of sales and dealer support, Signature Custom Cabinetry, Inc.

Being socially responsible is more than just reacting to a market focus on the environment. Certainly the environment is a very important part of social responsibility, but it needs to go deeper than that; it really begins at the core of who you are and what you believe.

Eight years ago we engaged in a process of documenting the core beliefs upon which Signature was founded. This process included surveying our associates, our associates’ families, our customers, and our vendors. We wanted to reach everyone who regularly comes in contact with us and has a stake in our success. We wanted their feedback not only on our “talk”, but also our “walk.” From these surveys emerged five very clear themes relating to quality, innovation, competency, integrity and people. These themes were developed into clear statements that represent our current Core Values. Visit <http://signaturecab.com/Culture/Ideals.html> to read the entire text of our Core Values.

In our five core values you will find statements like “there must be a better way,” “only the best will do,” “the relentless pursuit of excellence,” “doing what you say you will do even when nobody is watching,” “facing moral obligation,” “sharing responsibility for the well-being of all,” “serving the needs of the total person – spirit, mind, body and soul” and “envisioning a better future, one day at a time.” In hindsight, we now see that these five core values help shape our broader concept of social responsibility that drives us to do what is right for the planet as well as for its inhabitants.

Last year, we decided to pursue our industry’s “green” certification (Environmental Stewardship Certification) through the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association and were approved on our first application. This was an encouraging testimony to a company culture that has always focused on minimizing hazards to people and the environment. When our dealers and designers began asking us questions about the “green” aspects of our products, we simply needed to tell them the truth about what we have been doing and what we are committed to continue doing as a result of being value-driven and socially responsible. The message was enthusiastically received and embraced.

We highlighted ongoing efforts to reduce our waste stream through recycling efforts and process improvement. We pointed out that all our wood dust and wood shavings are used by local dairy farmers as cattle bedding, that wood scraps are used by a local greenhouse to generate heat in their plant growing operations and that all of our solvents are distilled and reused in our own manufacturing process. What cannot be reclaimed is sent to a concrete manufacturer and used to fuel their dry kilns in the curing process. We also discussed where water-based and UV curing finish technology is used in our products to further eliminate hazardous materials from the environment.

Those are just a few examples of what we are doing in our business to be more “green” and to be socially responsible. My challenge to you is to set some standards related to social responsibility for your business. Then, put in place some best practices that will help focus your organization on being more environmentally responsible. Keep learning and stay current always seeking new ways to eliminate hazards and waste. We sincerely believe that taking care of our planet is a vital

part of taking care of the people who inhabit the planet including yourself, your employees, their families and the community.