

# Taking the pulse of the industry

Over the course of the last few months, COVID-19 has presented almost every company in the woodworking and wood processing industry with new challenges and it's not over yet.

However, as an easing of restrictions is on the horizon and industry is opening up again slowly, we wanted to hear from you and here is what you've told us.



**BARRY FREIBURGER**  
President, George Guenzler & Sons, Kitchener, Ontario



**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

Revenue change was swift and immediate because of client closures.

To ensure we had the liquidity we terminated early payment discounts with vendors, but still ensured all vendors to pay within terms to maintain cash liquidity.

Regrettably some employees received notice of layoff.

We also reduced hours of operation without affecting remaining associates weekly pay.

We performed deep cleaning of the plant done by associates daily and weekly to ensure staff safety.

Cancelled all visitors to the plant and put in place protocols for shipping and customer pick up to maintain social distancing requirements.

Cancelled all plant mass meetings and maintained social distance within our production process.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

We are fortunate to have been deemed an essential service as we have many clients serving the healthcare industry. We had many rush orders for recliner frames and pull-out

daybeds etc. for temporary expansion for COVID-19 patient care. We were able to deliver some very large orders in 1-2 weeks to help with the pandemic effort.

We count ourselves lucky to be able to stay open even if at a limited capacity.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

I don't know if I have any wisdom to share except that I always avoid taking on too much debt throughout my time in business. This has allowed our company to weather this unforeseen event.

I have never experienced a total shutdown of the global economy and hope to never see it again. I think this event will be felt for years in many industries.

Final advice, the government has a couple of programs in place to help business survive this event so there will be jobs to go to when this is over. Look into the payroll 10 per cent subsidy for up to 25k per company. This is offered through all payroll services and can reduce your payroll expenses immediately.

Then also apply for CEWS (Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy).

These are both very good programs to help businesses survive through this painful event and then look to grow when it is over and there is some return to normal economic activity.

**STEVE HUMPHRIES**  
Bar Designer / Owner, Fergus, Ontario



**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

- Our shop is naturally set up for social distancing of minimum two metres.
- However, we have also implemented 'zones.' Each employee has a zone. If you leave the zone to use another tool, it is your responsibility to clean that tool prior to and following use.
- Washing hands as soon as entering building

- Our showroom is still closed but when we open it will have standard cleaning before and after procedures.
- Office staff is working from home, but will start part time in office with standard cleaning procedures.

Installations are our biggest challenge. We are not sure how we will handle this yet. Multiple people in one vehicle with masks or multiple vehicles? Masks during install? Footwear?

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

I am currently lacking any wisdom.

**WE ASKED: "How do you ensure support for your customers?"**

"Our support team has always been able to train, support and complete projects online and remotely. We continue to do this even more now."  
— PETER MATE, PRESIDENT, PLANIT CANADA

- Minimize personnel on site.
  - Masks and gloves to be worn on site.
  - Ask clients not to interact with our installers/delivery people unless absolutely necessary.
  - Clean all surfaces with sanitizer when work is finished.
  - Clean all tools when finished working.
- LIVIO PASSALANT, CRESCENT CABINET COMPANY LIMITED

Online quoting and emphasizing our 3D rendered videos of each bar.  
— STEVE HUMPHRIES, BAR DESIGNER / OWNER

By having an amazing dedicated staff that is finding ways around every hurdle in real time.  
— TARA MURPHY, KCD SOFTWARE



**FRANK BECK**

Beckville Woodcrafters, Maple Ridge, B.C.

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

We have had to change our policy and procedures to include anyone (staff or visitors) entering our building (shop floor or office) must wash their hands when first arriving.

If you have to leave and re-enter the premises you must wash your hands again.

If you are feeling unwell you must stay home and self isolate for 14 days. You must maintain two-meter distance. We have a worker that is responsible for wiping all handles, switches, keyboards, and etc. with disinfectant and screens with alcohol.

Deliveries are asked to stay outside and we will go to them to unload.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

We are working with our customers and have let them know that we will be maintaining social distancing and cleaning as needed. This is taking a little longer to do the work, but it's in everyone's best interest

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

Please use common sense, wash your hands and cover you mouth when coughing or sneezing and keep two meters between everyone that doesn't live in your own house! We will get past this.

“If everyone is working together and stays united, we have a much better chance of fighting and winning over the pandemic. It reminds us that we all are equal regardless of religion, culture, financial situation or occupation.”

— DHWANI PATEL, DIRECTOR, LAKEVIEW MILLWORK

**CAMERON GLEGG**

Project Manager, Stirling Woodworks, Maple Ridge, B.C.

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

We had already started the process of instituting the use of Microsoft Teams for a more agile and remote hub for communication. This has proven invaluable for our office workers as there was little to no down time when the regulations were instituted in B.C.

We created a shipping/receiving process that was contactless, one that would protect our workers.

We ensured that there was a daily process of wiping down all surfaces and posted messages throughout our office and shop to remind employees to wash their hands.

We ensured that all personnel could complete their work while

maintaining a two-meter distance.

We ensured that we had enough PPE to keep our installation personnel safe on site, and made sure that they complied with any regulations being enforced by our clients.

The biggest single adjustment was to ensure that everyone in the organization felt comfortable doing their job during the pandemic. This manifested in people taking time off to be with their families and ensure the health and safety of their loved ones until they felt like they could return.

Compassion and understanding was the major driving factor behind all of our decision making during this time.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

We try to keep a very flat hierarchy so most people (even office personnel) were able to jump in on the shop floor and help out with whatever task needed to be completed. This meant that we



A team photo taken at Stirling Woodworks' legendary Christmas party. From left are: Brian Nielsen, Ryan Sabiston, David Bilyk, Dan Axton, Steve Glegg, Cameron Glegg, Justin Andrews, JP Fortier, Joshua Burgess, Brian Erfle and Mukesh Sahore.

could keep up with our deadlines.

We have also found that once the situation had been communicated, our customers were very understanding that deadlines will shift during these times.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

Stay flexible; don't let hierarchy or a false sense of importance get in the way of completing tasks.

Institute a communications platform

for remote work; there are more benefits than just being able to work remotely.

Having a place where all communication is stored and accessible is just good business.

Be transparent with employees and clients, everyone is working towards the same goal.

At the end of the day people are what drives your business, be compassionate and understanding. The benefits of this approach are unending.

**MATTEO FREGOSI**

Salice North America

Salice Canada has a strong team that is committed to one another and to supporting our customers during this tumultuous time.

We have maintained appropriate safety measures both globally and locally throughout the past two months ensuring

a safe and secure environment for our entire team, customers and vendors.

We are also pleased to say that our parent company in Italy has resumed full production and we are fulfilling orders as they come in at all of our North American locations without any interruption.

At Salice, customer service is a philosophy, not just a department and we are committed to supporting

all of our customers now more than ever.

We are fortunate to have a strong internal and external sales support team as well as a technical department staffed with life-long cabinet makers that are able to service our customers in person, on the phone or virtually.

We hope to see all of you soon and we look forward to building a stronger foundation for the future together.

Stay healthy and safe!



**DHWANI PATEL**

Director, Lakeview Millwork, Mississauga, Ontario

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

Lakeview's priority is employee's safety in this situation. We have taken safety measures for employees i.e. provide facemasks and hand sanitizers every day.

We have closed the doors to the shop. Nobody, including deliveries can enter the shop directly. We have quarantined the area for delivery of goods and small packages.

We always remind our employees to maintain social distancing rules.

Lakeview has adjusted numbers of employees as per the scheduled delivery of the projects. Many projects have been delayed and some of them cancelled. We appreciate government financial aids in this situation i.e. CEBA, CEWS etc.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

Lakeview has double-checked the delivery schedule to see if there are changes from our customer due to this unusual situation. We also made it clear to our customer that there are potential supplier delays as well.



For example if there is a breakdown of a machine, it may take longer than usual to source a new part.

We also demand that our customers provide a safe environment for us to deliver goods to them and when we do installations.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

If everyone is working together and stays united, we have a much better chance of fighting and winning over the pandemic.

It reminds us that we all are equal regardless of religion, culture, financial situation or occupation.

It reminds how precious our health is and that we need to take enough safety measures, precautions and follow government advice.

Please be patient, this shall pass and we will win against pandemic.

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**MATT FLEMING**

Vice President of Sales, Biesse Canada

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

The main adjustment is the face-to-face communication with our customers, colleagues and partners. In the past if there was something of importance to discuss we could drive or fly to see someone and get to the heart of the matter. During this time it is much more difficult, but we still manage with Teams or Zoom. In the future it will make us more effective using these social mediums, but we still miss the in personal contact.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

Honestly we haven't missed a beat in supporting our customers. Our parts departments both in North America and Italy have remained open and our hotliners and 20-plus local technicians have been made available. Having most of our customers in the essential services bracket has given Biesse the opportunity to support them.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

Don't lose a second to become more up to speed on digital competency to interact with both your internal and external teams and partners.

When the pandemic struck, we were on a phase two implementation of digital communication within Biesse. This allowed us to quickly and easily shift communication with our customers.

More and more customers are asking us about automation and how it supports the new social distancing requirements mandated to keep people safe.

Now is the time to investigate how it can benefit your manufacturing requirements.

**IRIS SHAROFI**

General Manager, Blum Canada



As a company, we are pulling together even more and are confident that we can and will support each other as well as the market through these trying times.

Given that the crisis will not disappear overnight, we have prepared ourselves as well as possible.

Due to the COVID-19 protection measures, we will continue a work from home practice in many areas for the coming weeks. All in all,

it is important that work in the company continues to run smoothly during these special times and that we fulfill our tasks.

We have taken steps to stay connected and maintain a high level of support and communication in the market. Internally we promote video chat in place of email or even instant messaging to maintain a level of personal interaction to bring about some level of normalcy. We remain highly flexible, understanding of unforeseen needs and are optimistic for the future.

**SCOTT BURTON**

Sales Manager, ROYCE//AYR Cutting Tools

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

The Royce//Ayr team is fortunate to work in a large well-maintained facility, which allowed for quick layout modifications and policy changes, to provide adequate physical distance between team members. A strict cleaning and hand hygiene policy was implemented immediately with full compliance. Many of the unnecessary interior doors within the building were completely removed to reduce the amount of frequently touched areas. Our sales force has quickly adapted to various videoconference platforms depending on customer requirements, which has made communication even more efficient in some ways.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

First and foremost, we are listening to the different needs

of our customers. Royce//Ayr has been operating as part of a necessary supply chain throughout this entire situation. We are proud to support all of our customers and feel fortunate our business is still operational. We understand each of our customers is dealing with the COVID situation in different ways, so we are willing to adapt and service customers still in operations, and work with those customers who suspended operations as they plan for re-opening. To service our customers still in operation, we have maintained our driving service to avoid dealing with delivery companies, which are overloaded with an influx in delivery requirements. Our sales and customer service team is available via phone, email or various videoconference platforms, to provide safe and convenient application support, directly to your production floor.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers?**

There is plenty of reason for negativity given the state of our economy, and future business challenges ahead. However, if



we stay focussed on what we can control, and search for positive news, there can be cautious optimism about the future. Our businesses have been forced to adapt quickly and find new ways to improve efficiencies, which will improve our operation productivity going forward. Sales teams have been forced to find new and better ways to communicate. Many of these videoconference platforms have been available for years, but not utilized properly. This situation has pushed video communication to a new level, which will improve sales efficiency and all communication within our businesses.

We have witnessed unprecedented cooperation between Canadian businesses, which will leave a lasting legacy for future business relationships.

Now is a time for collaboration between Canadian businesses as the global economy reorganises.

**JÜRGEN KÖPPEL**

CEO, Leitz GmbH & Co. KG

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

Leitz Canada proactively set in place measures that mitigated potential risks to our employees and customers as early as February.

We implemented a safe distance drop exchange program and added a team sanitization regiment while operating internally with personal protective equipment and safe distancing.

Due to the fact that Leitz Group was exposed to Corona very early in our Chinese sales and service company, we were adequately prepared for the challenges here in Canada. We maintained full staffing despite uncertainty ensuring our commitment to our customers while

providing service to those customers who no longer had support.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

In this unprecedented time, we understood the level of stress, both personally and professionally was high; therefore we took an ardent and steadfast approach by contacting every customer by phone and email to communicate our program "Well prepared. We will be there for you!"

By doing so, we could support our customers with tools and services in these critical times. It goes without saying, always with the highest possible security standard.

In addition, we increased our efficiency through continuous improvement that has resulted in very attractive service turnaround times, which we put under the headline "Leitz on."

"We focussed on developing a connected response system, transparency and setting a point of differentiation in our market space." — JÜRGEN KÖPPEL

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

The success of any organization is only as good as the strength of the team collaborating to achieve a common goal, especially in challenging times like these.

We focussed on developing a connected response system, transparency and setting a point of differentiation in our market space. We encourage each organization to focus on building a foundation that can be agile and offer a unique value proposition, which will set them apart from the competition. This is what customers and employees are looking for.



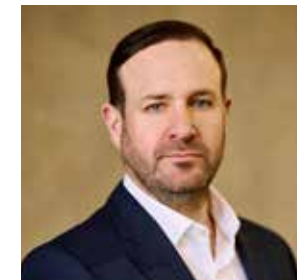
**RYAN AKHURST**

Vice President, Akhurst Machinery

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

At Akhurst we made the immediate decision to have as many of our staff as possible work remotely. We then put new cleaning and protection measures in place to ensure the safety of the critical staff that remained working within our facility.

This included but was not limited to installing touch free hand sanitizer stations around the office, relocated work stations to ensure proper physical distancing, set up hand washing stations, and provided masks to our staff.



We are proud to say that we remained fully operational to this point.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

We felt it was critical to develop a plan in which we could provide service to our customers, which remained open as we were all considered an essential business.

We developed new methods to deal with challenges that we

came across. As air travel was not an option we performed an installation of an edgebander over Zoom. It proved to be a very efficient way to provide instruction and support to this particular customer and I expect us to develop this further in the future.

Up to this point we had been providing video support to our customers, but not performing machine training. For on-site installations and service visits our service team have been performing physical distancing and wearing single use gloves and masks.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

It is important to be nimble and flexible during times of uncertainty.

During this pandemic there has also been a great deal of anxiety and it is our job as business leaders to ensure that our staff, customers, and supply chain partners feel as safe as they possibly can.

Really the first day we set up a committee to formulate a plan, which would address any safety concerns but also plan for the new "normal" of doing business.

Communication during this time is critical. Early on we were communicating daily with our staff about what measures we had implemented to ensure their safety. This immediately reduced the anxiety of our people and allowed them then to focus on the business of servicing our customers.



**JIM LAWRENCE**  
Avondale Kitchen,  
Jacksonville, NB

Avondale Kitchen in Jacksonville, New Brunswick is fortunate in that that province has experienced very low incidence of coronavirus and zero deaths from the disease. Regardless, however, Lawrence said they were quick to adapt to the changing environment and immediately installed Plexiglas screens throughout

the office and showroom, started social distancing in the shop as well as at clients homes and of course also instituted enhanced sanitary requirements. They also closed the showroom, which is now open by appointment only, group gatherings are being avoided and everyone keeps their distance and washes and disinfects their hands constantly. However, most of the business has continued as usual. Even though the pandemic has created challenges and adversity, there have been many positives. They now have integrated new safe practices in their working environment and the lessons they have learned and the procedures they

have put in place are going to be the new normal for them and will keep our employees and families healthier and safer. They have also started handing out pamphlets to customers informing them of the safety procedures as they apply to planning visits as well as installations. And prior to any installation, customers are advised, in detail, of all the new precautions that are being taken. Trades are also scheduled for different days to keep the traffic at any jobsite to an absolute minimum.



**MURAT DOGAN**  
President, IMA Schelling  
Group, Canada

We introduced “half-day at office / half-day at home” shifts for our office staff, so we have a lower number of staff at the workplace at any given time. We also implemented working from home, whenever possible. Our tele-service, phone support, on-site technical support and spare parts shipments have continued as before. We should be grateful to live in this great country, where the public and the governing bodies (be it municipal, provincial or the federal ones) have co-operated in harmony, to keep order and navigate calmly through these stormy times.

**TARA MURPHY**  
KCD Software

**What type of adjustments to your operation have you made to meet these challenges?**

Most of our customer interactions are through online communication or phone communication, which turned out to be lucky for us. On Friday March 13, we made the decision to get as many of our staff working at home as possible as we were watching the COVID-19 situation take place around the world. Everyone that was left in the office had his or her own room and restroom. That first week with a large portion of the staff working from home we were able to modify some of our inner workings to help set us up so that everyone could work from home if we needed to take that next step. On Friday March 20, we decided to close the building and have everyone set up to work from home.

For those that have never worked from home, it can be a difficult adjustment to learn how to make yourself be at work during the day and have other people in your home understand that you are at work.

Keeping all of this in mind as we set up our home working environments, we tried to find solutions to keep the company running smoothly, still having all

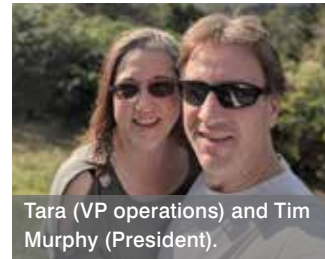
of our customers feel completely supported and having our staff feel completely supported.

What has impressed me most through setting this up, is how determined and dedicated our staff has been to making this work while keeping the customers feeling supported. This was a time when we really got to see how much our staff is willing to give back to our company. I am very proud and thankful for each one of our staff at KCD Software.

The first thing we set up was Microsoft Teams and Zoom, this gave them easy access to discuss things either through Teams channels, chats, sharing computer screens, voice chats or video chats, whatever is needed in the moment. We also implemented a daily lunchtime meeting so we can check in with each other and review things as the company processes continue to change as we keep making improvements to our flow of information.

We implemented a couple of virtual meditation/yoga sessions per week that the staff can join in on to help keep our bodies moving. We implemented a weekly water cooler meeting just for staff to catch up on all the interoffice banter.

We have implemented the automated receptionist, which is something I personally did not want to set up. I always liked that our customers heard a human voice



Tara (VP operations) and Tim Murphy (President).

answer the phones. However, during this time, with a lot of customers finding time to catch up on the KCD Software set-ups, our phones got so busy that our receptionist could not keep up with answering the calls and customers were leaving voice mails anyway.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

This is a changing time in our world. We are going to see businesses that thrive and businesses that do not survive and businesses that are hanging on by a thread.

We as a world need to keep in mind that we are all going through the same pandemic, but we are all having a host of different struggles as we try to learn what our new normal is for our own companies and families. If we keep being patient with each other, having discussions to work through the hurdles together and understand that we need to adjust some things, we will all come through this stronger and more connected.

**KEN ELLSTON**  
Director of Sales and  
Service, WEINIG  
HOLZ-HER Canada



Throughout this pandemic, countless numbers of WEINIG HOLZ-HER Canada customers have contributed to the fight by making face shields and masks, acrylic sneeze guards, hospital beds, and temporary portable ICU units. WEINIG HOLZ-HER Canada is supporting their operations and answering their service calls, while they work to manufacture the vital equipment needed in this crisis. At the declaration of the first provincial health emergency, we reacted quickly to take the necessary steps and precautions to protect the health of our employees, our customers, and our business. We implemented upgraded cleaning and contact protocols in our offices and for our people on the road.

We made quick investments in our IT infrastructure to ensure our systems were ready for increased remote activities and customer support.

This has allowed us a seamless transition to having many of our employees working from home.

We have maintained a minimum staffing level in our offices to ensure our customers continue to receive an uninterrupted parts supply, while at the same time ensuring that we are keeping our employees healthy and safe.

Our employees have risen to the challenge, adapted to the “new normal,” and faced these uncertain times with courage and conviction.

I want to thank every member of the WEINIG HOLZ-HER Canada team.

We continue to provide online and remote diagnostics and have embraced technology on the sales and management side including, virtual meetings, online webinars, education and training sessions, live on-demand customer-specific demonstrations, and live videos with product highlights.

Our technology is fully supporting

our employees and customers.

Across the country, lockdowns are gradually lifting, and while we see a light at the end of the tunnel, we are not out of the woods yet. There are difficult weeks

and months ahead for our industry and our customers. WEINIG HOLZ-HER Canada knows and understands these difficulties, and we are well positioned and ready to face these challenges together with our customers.

We are not just a machinery supplier; we are a production partner.

As to the question about words of wisdom, I could talk about how this is a great time to buy machines and invest in your business now to be ready for the turnaround.

While I think this is important and true, I also think there is a bigger picture here.

This is a time like no other, and I hope future generations never have to see something like this again. It has been a time of great reflection for me about what matters: taking care of our elderly, spending time with our loved ones, compassion and empathy.

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically affected the entire world; Canada and our industry are no exception.

Throughout this magnificent country, we have a world-class health care system that is second to none. WEINIG HOLZ-HER Canada cannot fully express in words our gratitude and appreciation for our front-line workers.

From doctors and nurses to first responders, food bank employees, bank tellers, grocery clerks, hotel staff, food sector workers, and of course, our industry’s essential companies and their employees. These people have worked tirelessly to support the fight against this virus.

THANK YOU!

While we all are focusing on surviving this together as an industry, a community, a country, a society, we need to remember to live along the way.



**NADJA MANN**  
President, GRASS Canada

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

Everyone in our front office is working from home. Their computers have been configured by IT to be able to access all of our internal company programs and information seamlessly.

Every sales person is also working from home most of the time because of social distancing requirements.

We’ve installed a secure video-streaming program, so we can have virtual meetings/chats internally as well as externally.

Our warehouse employees practice social distancing and we have provided hand sanitizer at every station, as well as for external truck drivers making pick-ups or deliveries.

Every employee has their own equipment, no equipment is being shared and everyone wipes, cleans and disinfects their equipment on a daily basis.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

We created product training videos, machine set-up videos and installation videos. Our sales people also have demo models on hand to go through certain things with their customer per video chat if a personal visit is impossible.

We never closed, we did not lay off any employees, and so we would not sacrifice our service.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

The most important advice I can give is to stay motivated. Every challenge will also turn into an opportunity. It’s tough at first, but never give up.

After each crisis, the economy recovered and expanded. Where there is a down, there will also be an up eventually. It’s like a heart beat, it’s not a straight line.

**CHRISTIAN PFEIFFER**

Global Director LIGNA & Woodworking Shows at Deutsche Messe AG, Germany

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

Despite or even because of the current pandemic, we are in constant communication with our industry partners. We know about their needs and fears. That is why we have decided, together with the VDMA among others, to extend the early booking discount by two months. The new cut-off date is July 31, 2020 giving our exhibitors a little more time to devote to the business activities currently required.

However, our exhibitors and partners

have also told us clearly in many conversations that after many months of abstinence caused by COVID-19, they are “longing” for a real platform to exchange ideas. Companies are already looking forward to the opportunity to once again

present their solutions face-to-face again at LIGNA in May 2021. Especially after the pandemic, which we hope will be overcome in 2021, it is all the more important to ramp up production again, boost the economy and provide customers with advice and information about innovations in personal meetings.

In any case, we are well prepared. Should official regulations on the observance of distance rules and



hygiene measures still apply in May 2021, we are prepared for this and can implement the necessary steps.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

We talk to our customers, keep in touch via social networks, send newsletters and put all the latest information about our Woodworking Shows Worldwide on our website. Even though we are currently on a condensed work schedule, we will answer every question as quickly as possible.

As the organizer of LIGNA, we have the advantage that many exhibitors and partners have been closely associated with us for years, some

even for decades. As such, we can, in a confidential telephone conversation, quickly clarify matters that would otherwise take much more time. This makes it all the more important that we all have a real platform at our disposal again soon - by May 2021 at the latest - to cultivate these close contacts in personal conversations and allow many new contacts to be made. We are looking forward to it!

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

The most important thing in such difficult times: Stay true to yourself, listen carefully and stay healthy! And don't forget: the future technologies of woodworking will be shown in May 2021 at LIGNA in Hanover!

**LUIGI DE VITO**

SCM Division Director, SCM Group

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

SCM has restarted with production and operations activities in Italy since May 4, in full compliance with the safety health protocols set out in the new Prime Ministerial Decree - DPCM for Stage 2 against COVID-19.

SCM is fully involved in improving the level of service provided to its customers, ensuring they receive all the support needed to optimize production processes and develop their businesses.

SCM responded to the current health emergency rapidly, responsibly and with a forward-thinking approach. From the outset, the Group established a dedicated executive committee, with a view to further strengthen safety measures at all the production plants and headquarters, including SCM North America, in line with ministerial directives, and further develop all the remote support and service activities provided to customers, the sales network and branches around the world.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

Even with the limitations imposed in the different markets, SCM never stopped assisting its business

partners, sales network and operating branches across the globe. In fact, the Group carried on, further developing all the remote support activities, training and assistance.

The SCM team will continue to work wherever possible to assist customers and sales workers. With this in mind, meetings, conference calls, practical demonstrations and online courses were increased

to all levels of business on the wide range of technologies offered us.

The Maestro connect platform provides instant access to a vast range of digital services which means the SCM team can assist wood industry operators in maximizing all the service and maintenance activities.

In addition, thanks to the e-Campus platform, SCM has further enhanced all its training activities with online courses, video tutorials and webinars on key woodworking matters, designed for customers as well as technicians in branches and dealers across the globe.

Supporting local communities as the COVID-19 crisis continues has become a top priority for SCM. With regard to SCM North America, the company is supporting efforts in the production of urgently needed medical supplies such as masks, hospital furniture, etc.



SCM is also offering complimentary troubleshooting and service interventions to the companies who are experiencing downtime and need to be operational for their contributions to the COVID-19 relief efforts.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

We all need to look at this current situation as an accelerator for change. We need to see this period as an opportunity to rethink our working practices, improve our production sites and make them safer, healthier and more comfortable, as well as transform and optimize our processes so that they become more sustainable and better performing.

Numerous businesses in our industry are investing even more in R&D, technological innovation and human resources: aspects, which, more than anything, will make a difference when we can start again.

SCM continues to invest in technology, know-how, skills and innovation to support them in these projects with the Smart&Human Factory: the vision of a digital factory with state-of-the-art automation systems, but ones which are accessible to everyone and based on a profoundly human approach and an all-round rapport with the customer.

“Those employees who we have been able to transition to working from their home office have done so seamlessly thanks to HOMAG’s great IT infrastructure.”

— MARCO FERNANDES

**MARCO FERNANDES**

Managing Director, HOMAG Canada



**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

When the crisis first hit we acted quickly and immediately began a staged approach to transition our office staff in all three of our Canadian offices from an office environment to a home office environment.

The staged approach was quick and methodical in order to ensure a smooth transition while maintaining full and uninterrupted operation.

**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

Those employees who we have been able to transition to working from their home office have done so seamlessly thanks to HOMAG’s great IT infrastructure.

When our customers call in

today they won't know if they are speaking to someone in one of our three offices or someone working from home, even I'm surprised as to how seamless the transition turned out to be.

Despite many of our employees working from home, not all are able to do so therefore our offices have remained open with the required staff to continue smooth, uninterrupted support for our customers.

Our sales team and field service technicians have been tremendously supportive and understanding of the fact that our industry relies heavily on them to keep things moving forward and as a result they have all remained fully active in the field supporting the industry while taking precautionary measures wearing PPE and practicing social distancing to protect themselves and anyone who they come in contact with.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

Often time's challenges bring opportunities and this challenge is no exception.

We have been forced to pivot and adapt to a new way of doing business relatively quickly and although it can be stressful at times, this new normal has opened up all sorts of new opportunities if we are open minded and adaptable to change.



**PAUL BILYEA**

President, Cardinal Fine Cabinetry, London, Ontario

Cardinal finds itself extremely busy right now as we just had a local competitor, unfortunately, close their doors. This happened just before the COVID-19 closure events.

As an essential service we are going strong. All of our workers are in the shop and we have only had a couple of our plant employees opt out of coming into work until the dust settles (pun intended) on the social distancing.

Our showroom is open by appointment only and all of our design staff has been using social media platforms to continue their sales and support our clients.

We have been leaning on our local Home Builder's Association as well as the Ontario and Canadian organizations. We have also contacted our municipalities to explain what it means to be a sub-trade during this time and we have shared that with our clients to ease their concerns and guide them into making the right decisions when it comes to making purchases down the road.

We also take the temperature of our staff on a daily basis and anyone visiting the building goes through a questionnaire to sign off on with respect to proper protocols as set by the Ontario Government.

**My best advice**

“Stay calm. Stay focused. You can't do it all. Break everything down into sections and tackle the items you can control today. The future may have some uncertainties but there isn't anything we can't adjust to get through this.”



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**ALAIN ALBERT**

Woodoer, Oakville, Ontario

At Woodoer, we have implemented quite a few changes starting with flex hours for our employees.

They have to feel comfortable and safe when they are coming to work so we asked them to come in and leave when they want. As it turns out, this coincides well with the varying volumes of work. When there is not too much to do, fewer employees do maintenance and 3S. When there is more work, more hands on deck.

We aspire to be clean and efficient on a regular day. The new normal at Woodoer is extra cleaning and disinfecting. Cleaning products are available everywhere in the shop and everyone uses them.

Our office and showroom is closed so we have adopted different video conferencing applications to interact with our customers but also to allow our admin and programming staff to work remotely. It was quite an ordeal at the start, but we've adapted very well.

Our customers are able to communicate with us via screen sharing; video and audio conferencing and they don't have to come to our office, which is an added benefit for everyone. The commute on remote working is great. Our web store has seen an increase in traffic over the last months, which is very encouraging also.

Everyone I talk to agrees that the new normal is going to be much different than the old one so all of our efforts will bring benefits to the business down the line and for a long time to come. It's important now more than ever to embrace change and look to improve every process in our business model.



**RENE DIONNE**

President, Hettich Canada

**What type of adjustments have you made to your operations in order to meet these challenges?**

Industry activity was affected to different extents in different parts of Canada. While Quebec operations essentially stopped at the end of March, business continued as usual in Western Canada. This geographic diversity allowed Hettich to continue to operate, although at a reduced level. In order to protect our employees and to remain compliant with government regulations, our HR team did a complete review of COVID-19 related rules, guidelines and recommendations.

Warehouse operations remained unchanged in British Columbia. Hettich Canada reduced on-site warehouse employees to maintain the minimum needed to receive shipments already in transit prior to the lock down and to ship orders to essential business customers and later on in April and May to all customers in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. In recent weeks, orders have begun to increase, and we have brought back additional staff as needed to meet customer demand. We are currently at 60 per cent of our warehouse employees to working full-time.

Hettich Canada had remote working protocols in place prior to the pandemic, so it was relatively easy to move the entire team, other than warehouse personnel, to a work from home status. We are using

TeamViewer, Zoom, Webex as well as FaceTime to communicate internally and to reach out to our customers. When details of the government wage subsidy program became available, Hettich Canada management team were able to assess the impact on expenses and make the decision to rehire most laid off employees at 90 per cent of their previous salary, while working reduced hours.

We have developed internal projects to keep our employees occupied while working from home. These kept employees engaged with the business and helped to maintain good morale. As internal tasks are completed, the free time will be spent in structured training programs.



**How do you ensure support for your customers?**

At an early stage, we reached out to all our customers to first inform them that we were open and secondly to know about their status (open or closed and if open, to what capacity) and short-term needs. We adjusted our inventory accordingly.

We were able to maintain constant support since the beginning of the pandemic, even though our main operation is in Montreal. Through our online order system (started in 2019) we have many customers on EDI. From a customer support standpoint, we were able to maintain our service level as our entire customer service team adapted easily and quickly to the "work-from-home status" and stayed connected.

**Do you have any words of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers?**

The number one tip is to stay connected as much as possible with your employees. It helps maintain team synergies, momentum and most importantly, morale.

Do not be afraid to reach out to employees that may be struggling financially and/or emotionally to evaluate solutions to support them during the crisis.

Start reaching out to your customer

base using technology. Our industry is not the most up to date when it comes to video conferencing, sharing screens, training online, even FaceTime. One of our representatives has been doing hinge machines maintenance using FaceTime; everyone has a phone. Use the time now to practice customer interactions using technology and online platforms. This will definitely become more and more popular and some of this practice will stay after the crisis.

**PETER MATE**

President, Planit Canada



put in place a daily check-in call. It's not mandatory if you're busy, but if you can make it, it's a time for us to check in and hear each other's voices.

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

We've moved everyone to work from home. This presents some challenges for the people that used to work from the office, as they need to find a home space for work, but as a company at least half our team has been working remotely for several years now.

The systems have been in place and used for a long time already.

Since we don't get to interact with people face to face, we have

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

Stop the papers. Get digital and get used to working with remote colleagues, suppliers and customers.

Get systems that allow you access the information and continue business as long as you have your computer. Reduce to the minimum what is absolutely necessary to have physical papers or humans manipulating things in your process.



**LIVIO PASSALANT**

Crescent Cabinet Company Limited, Hamilton, Ontario

**What type of adjustments to your operations have you made to meet these challenges?**

- Hand sanitizer stations at each entrance must be used every time entering the facility.
- Wearing of gloves and masks when working in close proximity of each other.
- Cleaning touched surfaces four times a day.
- Have disinfectant at each popular machine to be sprayed on touched surfaces after each use.
- Minimize sharing of tools.
- No visitors past main entrance.
- Couriers not to enter past entrance. Leave packages at entrance for couriers to pick up or drop off.
- Having safety meetings every few days to go over any issues or new protocols that crop up.

**A word of wisdom, advice or a tip you could share with our readers.**

- Use extra vigilance.
- Don't relax protocols yet.
- Don't give up. ■



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