



From left: Mike Middleton, Vern Neff and Kevin Kahila.

Banks Lends a Hand to Improve Customer Processes

Two years ago, one of our long-term customers implemented an innovative continuous improvement program called “Kaizen” – a Japanese word that literally means “change to become good”. Originating in Japan, this program has been used by many titans of industry including *Toyota, Lockheed Martin* and *Maytag*.

The foundation of the Kaizen method consists of five elements:

- Teamwork
- Personal discipline
- Improved morale
- Quality circles
- Suggestions for improvement

Out of these five foundations, two key elements arise: the elimination of waste and inefficiency.

Our customer’s mission has been to review all their facilities, department by department, and find ways to eliminate waste and production inefficiency. They accomplish this by having week-long meetings called “Kaizen events” which focus on a particular area in the plant.

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Specific employees in that department or people with experience in that particular area meet, brainstorm and eventually implement changes to achieve the goals set forth for the event. Many times, machines are moved or modified and/or processes are changed or eliminated.

Over the last year, Banks Hardwoods was invited to participate in two specific Kaizen events to help them improve. The first Kaizen event was held at one

(See “Improved Processes” on Page 2)

Banks Sponsors the Second Annual

Dollars & Sense of Going Green Conference

The Second Annual *Dollars & Sense of Going Green Conference*, organized by the *Department of Forestry* at *Purdue University* and *Wood & Wood Products*, is a two-day educational program which will be held November 19-20, 2009, at the Renaissance Schaumburg Hotel in north suburban Chicago.

Banks Hardwoods is proud to once again be one of the main sponsors of this informative program designed to provide insight and information on ‘green’ programs throughout the wood products industry.

Wood products professionals, industry suppliers and industry association representatives will give presentations on environmental practices that include green design, certification, recycling and emissions controls among other important ‘green’ practices that influence our industry in today’s global marketplace. For more information on the upcoming conference, please visit www.greenwoodseminar.com.

(“Improved Processes” Cont’d from Cover)

of their manufacturing facilities. Mike Middleton and Kevin Kahila were invited to help be a part of their “Rough Mill Kaizen” to find ways to improve their rough mill process. Kevin and Mike were able to make positive contributions to the process, efficiency improved and the event was deemed a success.

Last month, Banks Hardwoods was asked to again assist at another Kaizen event. This event focused on improving control of the moisture content of the wood through all processes, including delivery to the customer. Thus they were in need of a wood drying and moisture related “expert.” We tapped our resident pro Vern Neff, who agreed to attend the event. Vern had a HUGE impact helping our customer identify specific issues and resolve them. As the Kaizen Director for the company stated:

“Continuous Improvement spans the entire supply chain, from our customers to our suppliers. Therefore, when we tackled one of our quality challenges, we knew that having Banks on the team would help us achieve our

goals. Vern brought valuable insight and expertise to the team which resulted in a new direction on how to best control the moisture content in the wood. We are grateful for Vern’s participation and Bank’s commitment to us.”

As far as we know, Banks has been the only vendor invited to be a part of these Kaizen events. This is a great honor and speaks volumes to the fact that Banks Hardwoods can offer so much more than good quality hardwood lumber. Our active participation in helping customers improve their processes sets us apart from our competition and is one more thing that Banks Hardwoods brings to the table to anyone interested in doing business with us!

American Chestnut Update

The American Chestnut Foundation is reporting that the first crops of blight-resistant saplings are thriving. At roughly 5 feet tall, the two year old specimens have completed their first growing season in three national forests.



15 Years at Banks



Greg Carroll is Plant Manager for our Menomonie Division. During his career at Banks, he’s worn many hats and acquired numerous skills in producing superior hardwoods.

In the early days, Greg was a long haired kid piling lumber and laying sticks. Over time his hair shortened and he found himself in the kiln department. Through hard work and dedication he progressed to kiln department leader. After several years of service he earned the opportunity to become Plant Manager of the Menomonie division, where he has flourished for several years. Greg always has a positive outlook and you can not help but be in a good mood when you are around him.

NHLA Boston Convention



The 2009 NHLA National Convention was held in Boston

NHLA

Sept. 30th through Oct. 3rd. Banks Hardwoods, Inc. was represented by our President, Spencer Lutz and our Director of Purchasing, Darren Hubartt.

KCMA Meeting & Tour

Richard Peters recently attended the KCMA meeting in Seattle, as well as the tour in Washington and Oregon. Banks is an associate member and a proud supporter of KCMA.

Banks Exhibits at AWFS Las Vegas

Banks Hardwoods exhibited our booth at the Association of Woodworking & Furnishing Suppliers (AWFS) show in Las Vegas, held July 15-

18 at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Nevada. Attendance at the show



allows us to keep up on the latest industry trends and renew customer relationships. Banks was represented at this important industry trade show by Spencer Lutz, Kevin Kahila, Richard Peters, Greg Ritchie and John Borrero. AWFS is a woodworking trade show that features suppliers of



From left: Kevin Kahila, Richard Peters, Greg Ritchie, Spencer Lutz and John Borrero.

all forms of woodworking equipment, supplies and services in addition to many manufacturers of finished wood products.



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