

CabinetMaker Shop visit

Profile

Surprise! You're a cabinet shop owner



Key equipment — Shop foreman Bruce Cabral feeds cabinet doors into a Progressive Systems single-end tenoner. Shop owner Michael Baranowski Jr. purchased the CNC tenoner to create a work cell devoted to just building cabinet doors.

Circumstance prompts one man to abandon his own career plans and take over the family business

by Ken Jennison
kjennison@wattnet.net

Shop Snapshot



Company: Baranowski Woodworking Corporation

Location: East Bridgewater, Mass.

Year founded: 1962

Proprietor: Michael Baranowski Jr.

Primary products: Cabinet doors, drawer fronts and mouldings

Sales, 2006: \$600,000

Number of employees: 3 (including owner)

Shop size: 10,000 square feet

Key equipment:

- Dimter S-50 cross cut saw
- Progressive Systems single end tenoner
- Raimann gang rip saw
- Weber KSF sander
- Weinig Unimat moulder

Web site: www.baranowskiwoodworking.com

As a boy growing up in East Bridgewater, Mass., Michael Baranowski Jr. dutifully helped out in his father's cabinet shop over the years. However, when his father died a month after Michael finished college, Michael was faced with a difficult decision – what should he do about the cabinet shop? Michael never harbored plans to be a cabinetmaker; in fact,

his degree and career path was architecture.

However, the shop was the family business, and on the plus side, there were several long-term employees Michael knew would keep the shop going while he learned the business. Further, Michael found the naysayers oddly motivating. "There is a typical theory that goes something like 'When a son takes over his father's business, it's only a matter of time before things go down

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New England traditional — According to Michael Baranowski Jr., owner of Baranowski Woodworking Corporation in East Bridgewater, Mass., although face-frame cabinets are generally the desired style in his market, more and more homeowners are happy with frameless cabinets.


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CabinetMaker Adapting



Baranowski's key moves:

- **Determined who his most knowledgeable employees were and let them handle shop operations**
- **Focused on learning the business aspect of the shop**
- **Reviewed the shop's product offerings for profitability**
- **Decided to focus on doors and drawers**
- **Visited successful cabinet shops in the Midwest to see how they manufactured their doors and drawer fronts**
- **Attended local and national woodworking shows to become familiar with machinery options**
- **Purchased automated machinery that freed him from being overly reliant on experienced cabinetmakers**

Owner by surprise
 — Michael Baranowski Jr. had never intended to be a cabinetmaker. However, when his father died unexpectedly, he decided to take over the family business.

the tubes," Michael recalls. "And while I had my reservations at first, I said 'That's not going to happen to me.' "

Michael decided to take over the shop, and in the years since, he has proven that theory wrong. While he makes no claims of being a master craftsman like his father, Michael has nonetheless turned Baranowski Woodworking Corporation into a success story. By adjusting the shop's product offerings and adding automated machinery, the company now boasts annual revenues of \$600,000 and a 10,000-square-foot shop that only requires two employees to operate.

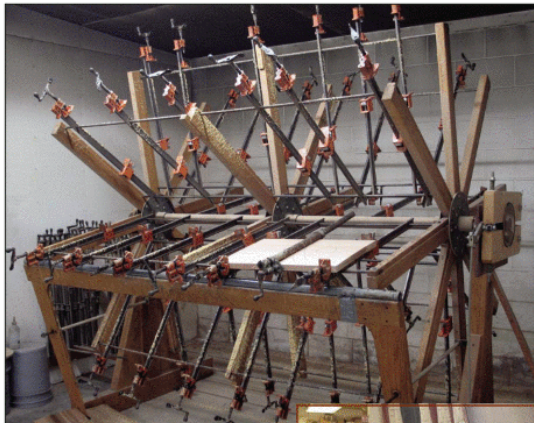
Changing to doors and drawers

Although Baranowski Woodworking had been founded as a full-service cabinet shop, shortly before Michael's father passed away the shop had begun a shift over to focusing exclusively on manufacturing cabinet doors and drawer fronts.

"I noticed that there was quite a niche for producing cabinet doors, because a lot of very small shops weren't really equipped to do it," Michael says. "If they were equipped, they just had one shaper, and it took them forever, and a lot of people wanted the shop to provide the doors and drawer fronts so, that's how it started."

Michael says that currently about 70 percent of the

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Family built
— Michael's father built this clamp carrier some 40 years ago. It is still in use by the shop today.

Shop Tour



Go online to www.cabinetmakeronline.com/bara.asp to take a complete shop tour

shop's business is one and two-man shops who find it easier to outsource their doors. According to Michael, these shops may have a shaper and a small drum sander, but for them to make a cabinet door, they have to break down their shaper five or six times to make their panels, stiles and rails, which is too time-consuming.

Baranowski Woodworking produces cabinet doors, drawer fronts, custom mouldings and occasionally fills an order for wainscoting. Early this year the company began offering custom finishing services. Only hardwoods are used, and cherry is the species most requested.

Research

While Michael's determination to be successful with Baranowski Woodworking was certainly a plus at the outset, it didn't necessarily make the transition from college graduate to shop owner any easier. He says he had quite a bit to learn. "I didn't take any business classes in college, so there was quite a learning curve to understand how to both run a business and a cabinet shop," Michael says.

One of Michael's first moves was to do research. He began by attending IWF and other woodworking shows, and then visited several large cabinet shops in the Midwest to see how they built their cabinets and doors, keeping an eye open for ways of manufacturing cabinet doors that could translate into a small shop

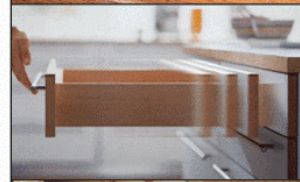
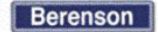
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Making blanks — Craftsman Waldemar Giro cuts blanks for an upcoming job. After the blanks are cut, a label is affixed to each blank identifying the piece and the job. From here, the blanks go to a clamp carrier.

environment. It was during this time of research that Michael realized that to increase his shop's efficiency, it was time to get some new machinery.

Adding new machinery

"I decided that I didn't want to rely on shapers anymore," Michael recalls, "mostly because they were just so outdated. So the first thing I decided to do was buy a moulder, a Unimat from Weingig."

After purchasing the Unimat, Michael later added a Raimann gang rip saw with a movable blade to the shop's machinery. The movable blade was an important feature for Michael because it allowed the shop to make piano cuts as well as do stile and rail rippings.

At this point, the shop was operating far more efficiently than it had been, but Michael had even more in mind. "I wanted to create a work cell just for cabinet doors. We had the moulder and the rip saw, but to be as efficient as possible I wanted to add a single-end tenoner, so I bought a Progressive Systems CNC tenoner."

A long shop

It only takes a quick glance at the outside of Baranowski Woodworking to see how the shop facility

Growing the market

Currently Baranowski Woodworking, located in East Bridgewater, Mass., serves cabinet shops in the New England area. However, owner Michael Baranowski Jr. is looking to expand on that.

"At first, our focus was on area businesses and customers, but now that we're getting more efficient in what we're doing and can produce a lot more, I'm reaching out. We



Careful examination — After running blanks through the Raimann gang rip saw, Waldemar Giro inspects the pieces to make certain they are both level and square.

has evolved. Beginning with a small garage next to the Baranowski home — the garage being the location of the original shop started by Michael's father in 1962 — the facility extends down the length of the lot. "We've added on to it eight or nine times," Michael notes. The area is zoned for both residential and light commercial.

The shop is now 10,000 square feet, set up in a long, narrow "shotgun" style. Lumber is kept at the very back of the shop, divided by species and loaded into wood racks. Lumber is ordered per job, and inventory is maintained using a Just-In-Time approach.

Shop tour

A job begins when a customer faxes or emails Baranowski Woodworking a work order. The information from that is put on a computer, which includes the sizes of panels, stiles and rails. All the panels have a sticker. The craftsman cuts the blanks and applies the appropriate sticker to each panel.

From there, the blanks go to a Raimann gang rip saw, which, with its movable blade, allows them to cut two sides at one time. Blanks then go to the clamp carrier. The clamp carrier was built by Michael's father and still is

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have accounts in Connecticut, and we have a few kitchen/millwork companies in Rhode Island. I recently went down to the Mid-Atlantic Woodworking Expo in New Jersey, trying to break into New York and the surrounding areas. We're definitely interested in growing our market."

For more information visit www.baranowskiwoodworking.com

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in use in the shop.

Stiles and rails are also cut on the gang rip saw, since two can be cut at a time. Most stiles and rails are cut at 2-1/2 inches. They are then run through the Weinig Unimat moulder.

Once the panel blanks are cut, they are sanded on both sides and trimmed to length. From there they go to the CNC tenoner. Assembly is done up near the far end of the shop, with doors clamped on a Lancaster clamp. Once the doors

are assembled, they are run through a Weber sander. A stroke sander is used occasionally to correct small divets or imperfections.

Dust collection for the shop is handled by an external Torit system. An inside Dustek system handles dust collection for the moulder.

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'Now that we're getting more efficient in what we're doing and can produce a lot more, I'm reaching out'

Possible expansion

At this point, Michael is contemplating exactly how he might expand the shop. "We're looking at the challenges of expanding this building, which is limited because of its length, but I think we could make the flow a bit better," he says. "If I added a couple more employees, I think we can do well over a million dollars in gross sales. As far as expanding beyond that, I don't know," he pauses, reflecting. "It's very comfortable here right now." □

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