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Kindel and Taylor merge old and new

Company will make both fine furniture and components in the same Grand Rapids location.

Combining craftsmanship and technology, Kindel Furniture Co. is merging with Taylor Co. and its subsidiaries to form a Kindel parent corporation that will produce fine furniture and wood components.

Kindel is known for its craftsmanship, bench assembly, hand carving and classic design. It is the last remaining manufacturer of residential casegoods in Grand Rapids, once the nation's capital for fine furniture. Taylor Co. in Grand Rapids has been a manufacturer of high-end, wooden and veneered components to Kindel and other furniture manufacturers since 1969.

The merged companies will offer four major branded product lines under the Kindel parent corporation: Kindel and its brands, Taylor Co., Taylor Millwork and the Superior Furniture Co. brand that Taylor Co. acquired in 2009.

Officials at Kindel and Taylor Co. have been in discussions for several months regarding the merger, said James A. Fisher, current CEO of Kindel and executive vice president of the Fisher Properties of Indiana Inc. Having held an ownership position in Kindel since 1964, the Fisher family is the sole shareholder in the company. John Van Zee, president and co-owner of Taylor, will serve as president/CEO and become co-owner of Kindel after the companies merge. Fisher will remain on the board of the new Kindel Furniture Co. as its chairman.

"Kindel is providing the reputation earned over the past 109 years, experience and techniques of old-world craftsmanship, designs and licenses, and customer relationships," Fisher said. "Taylor Co. is contributing advanced techniques in woodworking and modern business methods that will make Kindel much more 'custom capable,' which is the inescapable trend in fine furniture



Kindel is known for craftsmanship, bench assembly, hand carving and classic design. It is the last remaining manufacturer of residential casegoods in Grand Rapids.

Kindel and Taylor are merging to form a single company making furniture and components.

buying today."

Kindel's Amy Wolbert told *CabinetMakerFDM* that because Kindel makes furniture to order, they can customize their designs, and custom business is approaching 20 percent. While Kindel has used lean manufacturing techniques during the past two years, some manufacturing processes have constrained it from easily customizing orders and scheduling appropriate lead times. Taylor has developed proprietary methods of building furniture components to order through the use of CNC routers and other automated equipment.

"The Taylor methods will only enhance what people value in Kindel furniture," Van Zee said. "We will be using computerized machining methods on many components to ensure accuracy and precision while maintaining the Kindel heritage that includes hand carving, and decorating, luxurious upholstered details and fine finishing."

Fisher and Van Zee expect the new company to reap significant benefits from the merger of Kindel and The Taylor Co. by consolidat-

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Kindel is developing new lines of furniture that will appeal to a wider range of designers and residential customers.

ing manufacturing spaces and applying modern business methods to Kindel. Over the next few months, Kindel will move manufacturing operations from its multi-story, 170,000-square-foot plant at 100 Garden St. SE into the single level, 92,000-square-foot building that the Taylor company occupies at 4047 Eastern Ave. SE. Wolbert told *CabinetMakerFDM* that outdated machinery was one of Kindel's biggest obstacles in the past.

Van Zee said that Taylor has continually invested in precision automated equipment used in processing wood. Kindel employs 83 full and part-time people, and Taylor employs about 64 full-time people. Van Zee said that while it is early in the integration process, he expects there will be consolidation of the positions that will reduce that total number of full-time and part-time employees at the merged company, but it is not known at this point what the total number of employees will be. He said the company will try to retain workers wherever possible.

Looking ahead

The merger will mark the third time in the past two years that Taylor has brought more work into its Eastern Avenue location. In spring of 2009, the company purchased the assets of Superior Furniture, at the time based in Lowell, and moved the manufacturing to Grand Rapids. Established in 1936, Superior Furniture manufactures its occasional and cocktail tables, chairs, stools, benches and bedroom furniture in more than 50 finishes.

In September last year, Taylor acquired the assets of Quality Door and Trim in Holland and moved that operation to the Eastern Avenue facility. This division, now called Taylor Millwork, manufactures interior and exterior doors, as well as cabinetry.

During the past few years, Kindel has been developing new lines of furniture that appeal to more interior designers and commercial and residential customers. Highly regarded for its reproduction furniture, the company added the Dorothy Draper and the Knowledge Collection line of mid-century modern design. The merger will enhance Kindel's ability to customize existing products, improve its quality and delivery as well as facilitate its growing demand for one-of-a-kind offerings. ◀



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