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Inside Story

SCHWIETERS



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Two Brothers. One Commitment to Quality.



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John and Joel Schwieters are both involved in the construction business. John, president of JL Schwieters Building Supply/Construction, Inc., is on the beginning end of a construction project. Joel, president of Schwieters Companies, Inc., is at the end of the construction project. Between them, they have built a reputation for quality that other suppliers find difficult to match.

The brothers work side-by-side in an industrial park in Hugo, just five miles north of White Bear Lake. JL

Schwieters, John's company, offers services including estimating labor and material, designing state-of-the-art components and wall panels, framing residential and light commercial buildings, shipping/receiving and selling building materials, and pre-building components and wall panels at its manufacturing facility. Joel's company supplies finish carpentry, millwork, prefinish work, cabinetry, countertops, wood flooring and design services.

A closer look at their operations re-

veals a far more comprehensive approach to building than merely supplying 2x4s or cabinets.

JL Schwieters

Just as JL Schwieters is more than a framing contractor, it's also far more than a building supply store for custom builders. Since 1980, the company has employed some of the industry's most skilled carpenters, drivers/crane operators, estimators, designers, manufacturing workers, and management staff.

Whether it's a neighborhood devel-



Schwieters Design Center allows builder's customers to make their new home component selections.

opment or a single home remodel, JL Schwieters offers customized programs to fit most builders' needs. A tightly-run organization, it can meet deadlines on large-scale projects or on a high number of buildings, making it truly a one-stop shop for builders.

"We supply all the wood for building a house," says John "from foundation to peak. Carpenters can literally build a house in a day."

In 2000, JL Schwieters' carpenters

were cutting staircases by hand. "I was concerned about carpal tunnel syndrome," says John. "And I wanted to build a company that would allow an individual to work until retirement age. It is hard to do framing when you're 65 years old. I started looking for a machine that would take some of the hand labor out of it." The company now uses a CNC router to build its NexSTEP System™ staircases and Stair Cubes made of engineered wood

products run by software called Mastercam. The move resulted not only in reduced incidences of carpal tunnel problems, but reduced the amount of wood the company uses in building staircases. "If you look at our dumpsters, the only waste you'll see is the sawdust from the saw path or the router path. Everything else is used," states John.

The next step was to begin building wall panels. The 45,000-sq.-ft. wall paneling plant produces wall panels in a fraction of the time it would take to build them on-site. "When you stick-build a house, there are so many variables," says John. Pre-building the panels makes wall erection a turn-key operation. Plans are digitized and sent to the manufacturing plant. Design changes are handled in the plant, before a single piece of lumber leaves the yard. An entire wall package is sent to the field for installation.

All of JL Schwieters' building materials are stored indoors, one of the ways in which the company works to prevent mold and mildew problems. Building indoors also takes one of the biggest variables—weather—out of the equation. Work is not called off because of rain or snow, assuring that schedules are met on time.

John foresees a future with a greater emphasis on "green" building, and he is studying ways to make his building processes more earth-friendly, as well as using materials that will be energy-wise.



Above left: With wall panels, carpenters can literally build a house in a day. Above right: Schwieters Construction Park is located in Hugo, MN.



Top left: Schwieters Companies supplies & installs stair systems. **Top right:** An entire wall package is sent to the field for installation.

Schwieters Companies

Joel Schwieters began working as a finish carpenter in 1982. Today, he heads a 100-person operation dedicated to adding the finishing touches to today's custom homes. He finds that architectural millwork is in greater demand than ever before.

"In the past, the focus was mainly on picking out light fixtures and faucets at a show room. Now we're seeing more emphasis on the doors and millwork, which led us to open Schwieters Design Center for millwork, doors, cabinets and countertops," explains Joel. The Schwieters' showroom was built specifically to serve a builder's customers.

"We are seeing people interested in new door styles with wider casing and taller base profiles, with millwork profiles that match the door and architecture of the house," says Joel. With today's architecture calling for higher ceilings than in the past, the typical 6'8" door is no longer proportionate to every home. "We use a software program that will match the style of the interior door to the architecture of the house, and at the same time

determine the correct door height in relation to the height of the ceiling."

Using the correct architectural millwork in a home enhances its value and allows for a higher resale price. Joel explains, "In Denver, a builder constructed two identical homes side-by-side with one exception. One home had a higher level of millwork finishes. To compensate for the increased cost of the millwork, he made other changes in the other model, such as putting in a soaking tub vs. a whirlpool tub. The cost of both homes was equal, but the home with the upgraded millwork finishes outsold the other home four to one."

Joel likes to stress that his company's goal is to simplify the interior finish process. "We can take it from the raw product to pre-finish, to installation," he says. "Our builders can make one call and we take care of all inside finishes."

He also says his system reduces the amount of time it takes a builder to deliver a finished product. "It allows job superintendents to spend their time more wisely and focus on deadline dates and customer satisfaction.

We work on improving our processes every day, with a goal of having a delivery and install system that is the best in the industry."

Training is also of utmost importance to the Schwieters brothers, who both employ full-time safety directors. Employees of both companies get annual CPR and safety training. Joel's field carpenters train on a mock-up home inside the plant rather than learning on a customer's home.

The brothers continue to look for new ways of streamlining their operations, whether it is machinery or new building practices. They are committed to quality and it shows!

JL Schwieters Building Supply Construction and Schwieters Companies, Inc. are located at 13925 Fenway Blvd. N., Hugo, MN 55038.

For more information on building supplies and construction services, call 651-762-1110 or visit www.jlschwieters.com.

For information on finish carpentry, millwork, cabinets or design, call 651-407-1618 or visit www.finishcarpenters.com.