

Industry vets launch contract services company

By Liz Switzer

The challenging economy is forcing flooring suppliers to refine business strategies across all categories. Two wood industry veterans have teamed up to form a new company that is solely dedicated to contracting production services for suppliers.

From the Forest is a manufacturing company established by former Award Flooring founder Tryggvi Magnusson, president, and Susan Lang, general manager. The organization has begun production in a new 40,000-square-foot fully automated facility in central Wisconsin to create engineered wood flooring for other manufacturers and distributors, help clients develop new products, and assist them with equipment selection and factory layout in their own facilities.

Magnusson, a native of Iceland, started one of the industry's first laminate flooring manufacturing companies in Sweden in 1984 and provided consulting services to some of the industry's largest players. In 1997, he opened Award Flooring and introduced performance finishes to the wood flooring industry. In 2004 he left Award Flooring and started consulting for wood flooring manufacturers. It was his work for other flooring manufacturers that led to the opening of From the Forest's new



Tryggvi Magnusson and Susan Lang formed From the Forest.

Wisconsin design center, formally called the Wood Flooring Innovation Center.

"I became aware that our clients in the wood flooring industry wanted fresh product ideas but they also needed help with startup and backup production services so we opened the new facility complete with full milling, finishing and packaging lines," Magnusson said.

Susan Lang, a Wisconsin native, started her manufacturing career in the window coverings industry making wooden blinds and shutters for textile and home accessories giant Springs

Industries. She joined Award Flooring as vice president of operations and became one of the owners in 1998, and left in 2004 when she and Magnusson started the consulting business.

"We have been asked why we would start a new manufacturing company to support brand-name manufacturers and distributors when the industry has taken a sales downturn," Lang said. "It is actually the perfect time because when business gets tough new creative solutions need to be explored. For example, we are working with two clients on

new products as they prepare for Surfaces and we will be producing the initial inventory as well as samples so they can be ready to go with new merchandising and take orders that can be shipped immediately after Surfaces."

Another client is a distribution force in the industry that has been sourcing its wood from China, Lang said. "As supply from China gets more complicated and expensive, From the Forest is providing a way for the client to source what it needs, cost effectively, in Weston, Wis." Additionally, From the Forest is helping clients with sourcing Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified products and developing combinations of raw materials that can be used in green-certified environments, Lang added.

"We started the new innovation center because many of our wood flooring manufacturing clients were requesting assistance with innovative product development and also looking for a way to get them to market fast," Magnusson said. "The wood flooring industry has become significantly more sophisticated over the last 10 years, but many manufacturers and distributors still struggle to develop truly innovative product ideas and when they do it takes them nine months or more after presenting the product at Surfaces to actually get it to the retailers. From the Forest can solve both of those problems." **FCW**

Welcome to the new

