

Premier Flexes its Panel Processing Muscle

Premier EuroCase uses a variety of high-tech equipment to produce large volumes of store fixtures and flat panel components.

BY KAREN M. KOENIG

Andy Wilzoch has successfully eliminated the word “bottleneck” from the vocabulary of his 42 shop employees.

As owner and president of Denver, CO-based Premier EuroCase, Wilzoch has made it his mission to invest in the latest woodworking technology to ensure his company’s position as a leading producer of store fixtures and laminated OEM compo-

nents. Within the 70,000-square-foot facility reside more than 10 CNC machines and auxiliary equipment, most of which were purchased from Stiles Machinery Inc. Machines include: three panel saws, a dual spindle twin-table CNC router, three point-to-point machining centers, two drill and dowel insertion machines and five edgebanders — all designed to streamline the production process

and enable the company to work on a just-in-time basis.

“We run a variety of projects at the same time,” Wilzoch says. “A lot of the beauty of having so much equipment is that I never have to tell one customer that I can’t run his job because I’m running someone else’s. I can cut on any saw, for example, or change on the fly, so I never have any backup at the machines.”



Premier EuroCase’s 70,000-square-foot facility houses more than 20 CNC machines and auxiliary equipment for production manufacturing of store fixtures and laminated components. Programs are downloaded from the office and accessible to all the machines.

Aiding the production process is the fact that the entire company is computer integrated. Programs are downloaded from the office to the machines, which then “talk” to each other via bar codes and direct lines. “We were a pioneer in ‘paperless’ manufacturing,” Wilzoch says.

With its combination of multiple CNC machines and a streamlined production process, Premier EuroCase’s turnaround time for current customers is approximately two weeks, he adds.

Fixtures and Forms

Approximately 70 percent of Premier EuroCase’s estimated \$12 million annual sales this year is from production of its finished goods. The select list of clients includes Quiznos Subs, Gart Sports, SportMart and Oshman’s SuperSports stores.

Typically, “anything that’s made from wood” in these stores has been manufactured by Premier EuroCase, Wilzoch says. In the case of Quiznos, for example, Premier EuroCase manufactures the bench seating, tables, counters — even the covers that surround the trash cans.

As an added service to all its customers, Premier EuroCase offers turnkey services for “one-stop shopping.” Oftentimes this goes above and beyond the standard production process, Wilzoch says. For example, Premier EuroCase not only manufactured the wood fixtures for a Gart’s one-up specialty store, but also supplied and installed the metal components and rope for the functional boxing ring it had constructed.

“Stores often need to create a new look, but they’re still under pressure to get open fast. If you can be a ‘turnkey guy,’ they’re going to go with you,” Wilzoch adds. “Anything that’s required from us — we’ll do it. If we can’t, we’ll outsource to someone who can. Customer service is our number one priority.”

Expanded Capabilities

In addition to customer service, Premier EuroCase prides itself on its machining capabilities, says Wilzoch, who handles the design and engineering of projects.

“Within 30 minutes of having the design approved, we can have a pro-

TOTYPE programmed. We’ll do the prototype in the actual material so the customer can have a true representation of what the piece will look like,” Wilzoch explains.

Premier EuroCase works closely with contractors to ensure the fixtures meet all requirements. In addition, the company will pre-assemble all the fixtures in-house, “label everything” for the contractor, and then disassemble the fixtures and ship them to the

job site.

Premier EuroCase does not install the fixtures or millwork, preferring instead to focus its efforts on manufacturing. Inside the shop, Premier EuroCase’s manufacturing area is divided into sections: laminating, trimming, routing and boring, edgebanding, dowel insertion and assembly. The stations are all linked to each other via conveyors with transfers, thus reducing the need for material handling by



Premier EuroCase’s production rate has increased since acquiring the Homag BOF CNC router. The BOF has Intelligent Processes Optimization technology, allowing the twin-table, twin-head machine to operate in either synchronous-parallel processing or simultaneous independent processing modes. The router spindles can work in tandem or independent of each other, and feature 12-tool ATC units and 12-spindle drilling units.



Horizontal drilling and dowel inserting is performed on one of two Gannomat machines. Used for high-production runs, the Spectrum performs double-sided drilling and inserting on more than 2,000 parts per day.



An example of its turnkey service, Premier EuroCase not only manufactured the wooden components for this Gart's boxing ring, but also supplied the ropes and metal components needed to complete the display.



Premier EuroCase has three Holzma programmable panel saws. As parts are cut on the HPP 11, a printed bar code label, which also describes the part in writing, is generated. Roller conveyors and transfer carts are used to transfer the cut parts to the CNC router or boring machines.

Premier EuroCase

Denver, CO

Established in 1987, Premier EuroCase manufactures store fixtures and OEM components. The company's 2003 sales are estimated to be \$12 million.

Three Keys

1. The company's 70,000-square-foot plant houses more than 10 CNC machines and auxiliary equipment.
2. It is the first company in the United States to have a Homag BOF twin-table CNC router installed in its plant.
3. Premier EuroCase specializes in contoured edgebanding applications.

premiereurocase.com



The quantity and capability of its machines enables Premier EuroCase to seamlessly merge both high production and custom machining operations. The Weeke BP 12, for example, is used for one-ups and custom work.

employees.

The company uses a combination of melamine panels and high pressure laminated panels to manufacture both the OEM components and fixtures. The melamine panels are purchased from various sources while the high pressure laminated boards are processed in-house on a Black Bros. cold press using PVA glue. Although the rest of the plant works on a just-in-time basis, Wilzoch says the company tries to stay two-weeks ahead in its laminating process. Premier EuroCase laminates approximately 300 panels per day for its own use as well as for other area shops.

Once a job order is scheduled, cut patterns, generated on Holzma Cut Rite optimizing and planning software, are downloaded to the programmable panel saws. Premier EuroCase has three panel saws — two Holzma HPP 11 with Econolifts and an older model Holzma

HPP 81 which is typically used as a backup and for one-ups. As parts are cut, a printed label is generated with both a bar code and a written part description.

Q Systems roller conveyors and transfer carts move the cut sheets to either the newly acquired Homag BOF CNC router, or one of the company's three point-to-point machining centers: two Weeke BP-100s and a Weeke BP-12. All the machines have bar code readers to take the information from the part and call up the program.

The choice of machine is dependent upon the part size, type of operation, and run size. The BP-12, for example, is used primarily for custom work. The BOF, which was purchased in March, was acquired for its speed and multiple capabilities, Wilzoch says. Spoilboards, pods or gaskets can all be used, "giving us flexibility in the parts and sizes to be machined."

"The BOF has two tables, so we can program two different jobs. The two spindles can be used together to process a single job, or they can operate synchronously on two identical jobs on each of the two tables," Wilzoch says.

"Our production rate has at least doubled. A lot of work that was done on the point-to-points is now being done on the BOF," he adds.

Horizontal drilling and dowel insertion is performed on one of two Gannomat machines from Tritec Associates. For large production runs, Premier EuroCase uses the Gannomat Spectrum, which is a double-sided

feedthrough drill and dowel insertion machine capable of running 2,000 parts per day. The Gannomat Index 125 is a single-sided machine used for smaller-sized parts and runs.

There is no minimum order requirement on jobs, Wilzoch says. "Because I have so many machines, I can set up for a one-off part without interrupting production." Shop employees are all cross-trained on the various machines, aiding flexibility.

Contoured Edge Specialist

Another advantage Premier EuroCase has over many of its competitors, Wilzoch says, is its ability to band contoured edges.

The company has two Homag BAZ CNC contour edgebanding machining centers; the first was purchased in 1996, the second a little over one month ago.

"They perform the typical CNC operations you'd see in a machining center, but they also apply 3mm, PVC or wood veneer edgebanding to the contoured edges of the panel," Wilzoch says.

"It gives a very clean finish. When the machining cycle is done, the part is ready for inspection and shipment."

In addition to the two BAZs, Premier EuroCase has three straight edgebanders for banding door and drawer fronts, as well as any straight



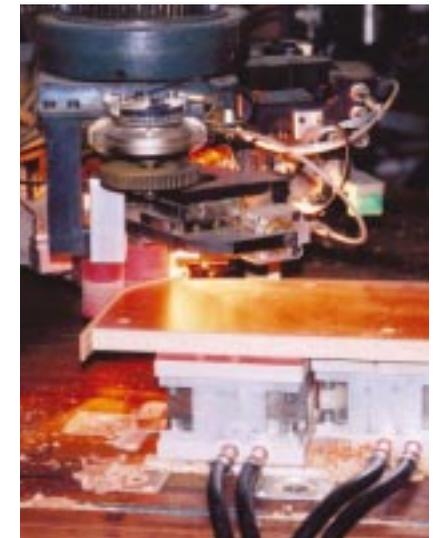
This Gart Sports display illustrates Premier EuroCase's capabilities for curved and straight applications.

edge components. The Homag SE-9300, Homag KLO-78 and Homag SSE-760, which was purchased in November, give the company the capability of banding both thin and thick PVC and lumber edgebanding.

Case goods are assembled on either a Ligmatech MPP10 or Holz-Her 1528 case clamps. Dedicated machines, including two Altendorf F-45 sliding table saws, are available for any

rework or small custom jobs.

Inspections are performed at each station and prior to shipment. It's all part of the company's reputation for quality parts, and its philosophy of taking care of the customer, Wilzoch adds.



Above, the Homag BAZ CNC contoured edgebanding machining center cuts, edgebands and trims parts such as this shelf. Premier EuroCase purchased a second BAZ earlier this year.



Left, approximately 70 percent of Premier EuroCase's business is for the store fixture industry, whether an entire store layout, custom rollouts or POP displays. Pictured is a display made for Quiznos Subs.