

Countertop firm sees boom with construction

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Contour Countertop's Tacoma operation has become a solid example of manufacturing companies leveraging market trends to maximize success. As the company prepares to move its Seattle operations to Kent and invest some \$250,000 worth of equipment at existing facilities in Tacoma, officials at Contour say its segment of the ailing manufacturing sector is healthy as can be.

When Contour Countertops began operating in 2000, interest rates had already laid the foundation for growth in a number of manufacturing sectors affiliated with the explosive construction industry. Contour's man in Tacoma, Chuck Maiwurm, says Contour was in the right place at the right time, but the company's growth – from revenue of \$3.92 million a year in 2000 to more than \$10 million in 2005 – has more to do with quality and attention to detail than luck.

“Even if the construction industry slows down, we'll continue to grow,” says Maiwurm. “We have worked hard to establish relationships with our customers and do the best job for them. Those kinds of relationships are so important in the long run.”

While Maiwurm concedes that his company has benefitted from lower prices of standard materials such as granite and stone, Contour also has invested in its future by



Master craftspeople maintain the quality demanded by Contour's top brass

introducing and popularizing new products such as Natural Quartz Stone – a quartz-based material that is manufactured with special resins to be virtually maintenance-free as well as stain- and damage-resistant.

Other investments include machines that automate basic cutting and shaping of materials, for example, before products are handed over to craftspeople for that final finish. Maiwurm says automation helps keep labor costs down while making room for growth through increased production capacity. Between the new showroom and base of operations in Kent and new equipment in Tacoma, Contour will have spent some \$4 million when all is said and done.

The company's new showroom, meanwhile, will add retail sales to an already booming commercial and wholesale business that

includes customers such as Home Depot, Lowe's, University of Washington, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and Quadrant Homes.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Contour Countertops' most recent accolades and successes include:

Wood & Wood Products magazine August 2005 issues named Contour as one of the fastest-growing woodworking companies in North America for the second year in a row.

Contour is now the largest manufacturer of custom laminate countertops and other laminate products in the Pacific Northwest, and has expanded into Portland, Ore., with the purchase of Superior Countertops.