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OF YOUR DREAMS

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Kivalo Fine Cabinetry:

BUILDING THE CUSTOM KITCHEN OF YOUR DREAMS

BY STEPHAN KLEISER

Tamas Zsoldos is fully trained in cabinetmaking, rough carpentry and finish carpentry – that’s what a four-year course in Hungary gets you – but when he arrived in Canada in 2002, he started out in hardwood flooring.

Not his first choice, but he had to start somewhere and he needed a job.

“Well, I was still working with wood, so that worked,” he says with a chuckle.

It didn’t take long for people to see his talents and a after a short time a custom home builder he met on the job decided to hire him to work for his company.

Next was a promotion to foreman that put him in charge of all the woodwork that goes into completing custom-build homes – not a stretch for Zsoldos since his training pretty much covered any work that has to do with wood.



Tamas Zsoldos



The Omnirobotic Panel Sanding Assistant was shown at Akhurst Machinery during Woodworking Technology Days.

“Like I told you, I was a cabinetmaker by training when I came to Canada, but because the training in Hungary is a bit different than here, in a four-year course I learned cabinet making, rough carpentry and finish carpentry so I had all the experience I needed to do the job.”

By 2005, Zsoldos felt ready to start his own business, which he called Woodpecker Finish Carpentry Inc.

The main focus of this company was detailed trim work and custom cabinetry. It was a success and the company experienced steady growth, and all of it by word of mouth because his work spoke for itself.

However, Zsoldos soon realized that his true

passion was custom cabinetry and by 2014 he decided to focus on that part of the work. He also rebranded the company to better represent what he was going to do from then on. That’s when Kivalo Fine Cabinetry was born.

The word Kivalo is a Hungarian word that means “excellent, brilliant, distinguished, great, high-class,” and that’s exactly what Zsoldos had in mind for his new company, to deliver excellent products and services.

“Today we do mostly residential projects, and while we focus mainly on the kitchen, we also build vanities, shelves and fireplaces, media rooms, wine cellars, everything really.

“We do mostly custom homes, but I am looking

to expand into commercial work as well,” Zsoldos says. “The shop is set up to handle everything, but we are still working on establishing those contacts in the commercial sector.”

He says they work directly with homeowners to help them with new homes or renovations, but he also has relationships with several builders and does projects with them as well.

Kivalo Fine Cabinetry offers two lines of cabinets, a more affordable line featuring melamine boxes, slides and dovetail drawers and HDF for doors, as well as a high end line offering plywood boxes and upgraded materials and fittings all around.

They also still offer an updated version of a



kind-of face frame cabinetry, but there is not a lot of demand for that.

"The point is that we can do everything our clients might ask for."

Starting out

In 2011, when he got his first shop, Zsoldos took over a small unit from an older cabinetmaker that he had met at a job site a few years earlier.

"He was getting ready to retire so I decided to take over his unit as my first shop. I also bought everything he had in his shop and that unit was about 2,800 sq. ft.

"Today, we are still in the same location, but we have expanded over the years and now we occupy the whole building, 15,000 sq. ft."

Zsoldos employs a total of nine people, including himself.

As far as equipment goes, Zsoldos says they have just about everything you can think of. From CNCs to hot press, edgebander, dowel inserter, packaging machines and much, much more.

"I like machinery and we buy what we need."

His latest acquisition – one he bought last fall – is the robotic Panel Sanding Assistant from Omnirobotic.

It offers autonomous sanding quality and performance and is specially designed for kitchen cabinet manufacturers.

Zsoldos says he was looking at automating some of his processes because – like everyone else – he is finding it difficult to find the right

employees. So last November he took advantage of WMS and Woodworking Technology Days in Toronto to look at machinery and that's where he came across the OmniTek Robotic Panel Sanding Assistant at Akhurst Machinery.

"I looked at a number of solutions and this once convinced me so I ordered it," Zsoldos says, adding that his is the first in Ontario and one of the first Canadawide.

Asked about how that was working out for him, he says it's been excellent.

"It's showing up every day, it doesn't complain and just keeps asking for more work, I love it," he says with a laugh.

"We are using it for one-piece doors, Shaker doors and it's been working perfectly."



“That robot is replacing at least two to three people’s work, it’s amazing. But I didn’t lay off anyone, they have simply moved on to do other things now.”

— TAMAS ZSOLDOS, KIVALO FINE CABINETRY

“That robot is replacing at least two to three people’s work,” Zsoldos says. “It’s amazing.”

“But I didn’t lay off anyone, they have simply moved on to do other things now.”

He says sanding is a difficult job and it’s not an interesting job and not many people want to do it. “So now, the people that used to have those jobs are doing other more interesting jobs and it is good for the company because we’ve been able to hang on to our people.

“We still have people working with the robot, it is called an assistant after all, but they are no longer doing the actual sanding. The end result is that we can do a lot more work now than we could before. The machine is expensive, but it is well worth the investment because it is much faster and more consistent.

“Another great thing was that it only

took a few days to get it set up and integrated into our processes, it was really, really fast,” he says.

“The technician came and set it up with us. They programmed in our programs, so now the worker doesn’t have to program the machine at all, and they don’t need any training either. All they have to do is pick from our programs, let’s say for a one-piece door, hit a button and the machine is ready to work. It’s so easy and fast, it couldn’t be simpler. That’s the beauty of it.

“So if you were to come to work here tomorrow, all you’d have to do is select the right program and then you are good to go.

“It has been a bit of a game changer for us, not only has it sped up and thus increased production and consistency, but it has also allowed us to deploy people to other more interesting jobs, which means they are happier and more likely to stay with us.” ■