



Internet Usage Study Looks at Woodworker Trends

To determine the effect of the Worldwide Web on the woodworking industry, *Wood & Wood Products* and *Custom Woodworking Business* magazines recently commissioned a research study of Internet usage and habits among product and custom woodworkers. Conducted by Vance Research Services, the study determined that 46 percent of professional woodworkers currently use the Internet for business purposes. Of those woodworkers who use the Internet for business, 64 percent say they are likely to use e-commerce to purchase machinery, supplies, and materials; and 90 percent use links, buttons, and banners to move from one website to another. Of those woodworkers who take action based on a company or product they saw advertised or featured on the Internet, 86 percent visit the company's website; 62 percent call the company directly; 50 percent send e-mail to the company; and 47 percent purchase the advertised or featured products. The study also examined what woodworkers access most often on iswonline.com, the official website of *WWP* and *CWB*. Product information and news/trends were the most frequently accessed portions of the websites. Contact Laurel Didier, 800-343-2016; ldidier@vancepublishing.com.



Industry eBusiness Trends Revealed in AWFS Survey

In an industry trends survey conducted by the Association of Woodworking and Furnishing Suppliers (AWFS), the first 92 percent of companies responding indicated they use e-mail to conduct business, and 96 percent of the companies have websites. In regard to sales on the Internet, 15 percent of those surveyed have secure B2B portals for sales. Casegoods and cabinetry supply are progressing most rapidly, with one-third of the respondents indicating that they have B2B sites in place, while only 17

percent of the machinery and tool members have B2B sites, and no upholstery and bedding supply companies have B2B sites. While many companies identified some percentage of sales being a result of Web technology, it is the casegoods and cabinets that lead the way with 44 percent associating websites to sales. In projections for 2001, one-third of the machinery and tool companies anticipate revenues from Web sales, and 50 percent of the upholstery and bedding supply companies project some share of sales revenue will be linked to their websites next year.



Computerized Cutting Model

Izard Irwin of New Zealand employs more than 400 staff in a facility to the north of Auckland where it manufactures millions of sawblades each year and exports 98 percent of them around the world, mainly to the United States. Because of the increasing competition in the U.S. market, Irwin asked Industrial Research Ltd (IRL) and its wholly owned subsidiary, Materials Performance Technologies, to produce a blade that would give it a bigger competitive advantage. Following several years of government research into basic wood cutting science, IRL's research team was able to apply their theoretical knowledge to develop a computerized cutting model to help Irwin design a new sawblade. The research company first built an instrumented sawbench fitted with transducers, which allowed accurate monitoring of sawblade performance. More than 130 sawblade designs representing the range of variability for key performance parameters were tested. A model based on the results was then built. Irwin now has a computer model and instrumented sawbench that enable it to design new blades to meet customer specifications.



Gene-Enhanced Trees

According to an article in *The Washington Post*, commercial tracts of genetically enhanced trees are expected to be growing by 2005. Within the past 10 years, about 130 outdoor tests of genetically modified trees – more than half of them in the last 3 years – have been approved by the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, which has primary responsibility for regulating bio-engineered trees in the United States. Gene-altered trees follow on the heels of bio-engineered soybeans, cotton, and similar crops – research that has been going on for about 10 years. Now, universities and biotechnology companies are perfecting the practice of injecting genes into trees. Some of the trees currently growing contain genes from bacteria, chickens, and humans. While it may seem like a boon to the forestry industry, opponents fear the genetically altered trees could adversely affect the world's forests. For example, soil-dwelling fungi and microbes that are the foundation of the earth's food chain depend on trees for sustenance. In addition, some fear that windblown pollen could spread the trees' altered DNA to related tree species, creating woody weeds with few practical uses.



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