

Bunk bed program spans North America

Several woodworkers have joined the burgeoning network to grow their sales and supplement their income



Steve Everett, a consultant for 1-800-BUNKBED, joined the program in 2008 after the economy affected his career as an independent woodworker.

By Jennifer Hicks
STAFF WRITER

Jim Rees, president and founder of 1-800-BUNKBED, offers home-based moneymaking opportunities for woodworkers. Hundreds of individuals have taken up the opportunity to run their own territory, with business locations in most U.S. states and all of Canada.

About 60 percent of participants are professional woodworkers with existing shops who want to either convert to this program on a full-time basis or to create an additional revenue stream, says Rees. Others are either looking to start a woodworking business using the resources provided by this company, or are retirees looking for something to keep them busy.

"We've had very few people come on board that have not had a pretty significant woodworking background. Their degree of skill might not be that great, but almost everyone knows their way around the shop and how to use woodworking equipment," says Rees.

Rees works out of the company headquar-

Your Cabinet Refacing Component Specialists



Over 1200 molding profiles, thousands of door styles, curved doors & components, corbels, valences, cabinet posts, shelves & more.

All products prefinished to match and shipped to anywhere in North America



Call us today at: sales@eliaswoodwork.com
1-800-665-0623 www.eliaswoodwork.com

Visit our booth #727 at WMS
Toronto, Oct 27-29, 2011



ters in Sandown, N.H., and has additional support at branches in Massachusetts and North Carolina. His role is to speak with newcomers about how the process works.

The idea started in the early 1990s when Rees was searching retail furniture stores for bunk beds for his children. The products available turned out to be either poorly made or too expensive to meet his budget, so he built the beds himself. Shortly thereafter, extended family members wanted to order beds. The business took off from there.

"I started getting more phone calls by word of mouth. My nieces and nephews were having sleepovers with their friends, and their parents started calling me to place orders," says Rees, who at the time ran a general contracting business in Gloucester, Mass.

Rees received so many orders that he started 1-800-BUNKBED as a manufacturing company, selling direct to the public and also to wholesale furniture stores. By 1993, he'd covered all of New England and decided to go national. He met with representatives from the Small Business Administration on how to proceed.

"We started with the idea we have today, which is we'll show existing woodworkers how to run their own independent 1-800-BUNKBED business from either their home or their shop."

Rees decided against offering franchises. While the business gives participants the umbrella of a franchise, such as protected territories, instant brand name recognition, and ongoing support, it does not require huge upfront fees and micromanagement. The program he offers, which is described on the company web-



Building bunk beds for 1-800-BUNKBED requires a \$95 setup fee and a monthly average licensing fee of \$265 per territory.

site, requires a \$95 setup fee and a monthly licensing fee, which averages \$265 per territory. Territory fees are based on the population of a county or group of counties that have a minimum population of 100,000 people. The highest concentrations are in the South.

"What separates us from being a franchise and designates us as a licensing business is we don't ask for a percentage of the sale; their profit is their profit. We do not have a staff that will contact them on a daily basis, making sure they were following what they're supposed to be following, and if we didn't like what we saw, we could pull the franchise. That would be too much oversight. I know woodworkers and I know, for the most part, they weren't going to go for something like that. We treat the people that come on board as adults. We show them exactly how to run this business and it's up to them to run it this way."

Participants start with a six-month trial to find out if it's right for them. At the end of the trial period, they can either part with the company or continue on with the agreement on a month-by-month basis, paying the same monthly fee. Once they join, participants get access to the 1-800-BUNKBED phone number, which is set up so any prospective client that dials the number in their territory will be connected directly to that local 1-800-BUNKBED business owner. They will also get a manual with materials and parts lists, a formula to determine pricing for all products, building and assembly directions, and marketing suggestions.

"They might want to work part-time, maybe hire employees — it's all up to them.

We don't mandate sales. We'll get the same monthly fee whether they make one or 100 bunk beds."

Steve Everett of Greensboro, N.C., joined the program in 2008 and is now a consultant for the company. "I saw an ad for 1-800-BUNKBED online. I spoke with my wife about it. It seemed too good to be true, but I figured all we had to do was sell one bunk bed a month and we'd break even, so we gave it a try," says Everett, who is closing in on a thousand bunk beds sold through the program and now has a total of 13 territories.

The company is a member of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, New Hampshire Business and Industry Association and the Better Business Bureau.

Contact: Jim Rees at 603-347-8332; Email: jrees@1800bunkbed.com, or visit www.1800bunkbeds.com for information. **W**

Woodshop News has a new owner

Soundings Publications LLC, publisher of Woodshop News and two marine titles — Soundings and Trade Only — was purchased by Active Interest Media.

AIM is a rapidly growing media company with a focus on enthusiast magazines and related consumer shows, Internet sites and books.

"These acquisitions allow AIM to expand our marine, consumer enthusiast and B2B portfolios with highly differentiated print, digital and event properties," AIM chairman and CEO Efrem "Skip" Zimbalist III said in a statement.

AIM president and COO Andy Clurman said Woodshop News is a fit "with AIM's Homebuyer Media Group that serves a wide spectrum of custom home builders and craftsmen. In all, this is a rare opportunity to bring together great brands and excellent teams that share a passion for the communities they serve."

Based in El Segundo, Calif., AIM's five publishing groups include Healthy Living, Marine, Home Buyer, Outdoor and the Equine Group. The company publishes 40 magazines and numerous websites including Yoga Journal, Back-

packer, Vegetarian Times, SNEWS, American Cowboy, Log Home Living, Arts & Crafts Homes, Peaks, Dressage, Black Belt, Yachts International, and others.

AIM (www.aimmedia.com) produces and markets conferences, DVDs and books, and produces log-and-timber home shows and seminars. The company also produces the Fort Lauderdale International Boat Show, the largest boat show in the world.

The company was formed in October 2003 by the private equity investment firm Wind Point Partners and Zimbalist. **W**