

Finding a market in the houses of God

Enterprise Edge

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When Don Taggart was still alive, his furniture restoration business, Fredrick and Emily's Inc., landed a \$50,000 contract to fix a church's pews.

And the eyes of his son, Fredrick Taggart, were opened to a lucrative market: church furniture restoration.

Two years ago, the younger Taggart decided to refocus the Mount Joy-based company from residential and commercial furniture to church and synagogue furniture. A year ago, the shift was complete.

The work has been steady so far, bringing in about \$70,000 a month. Fredrick and Emily's has 10 employees, a number Taggart expects to double next year.

"At least on our end, it's easier to get a whole lot of work," Taggart said. Often, it comes by the tractor-trailer load. For the residential and commercial work, each piece had a separate work

order and contact information for questions.

Since Fredrick and Emily's changed its focus, the residential and commercial restoration has been almost completely phased out.

"It made no sense anymore, to go out for \$5,000 to \$10,000 commercial jobs, much as I hated to (end the focus on commercial and residential work). That was the reputation our father built. But it's much better for us," he said.

And Taggart sees networking as a vital way to keep his church-business contacts coming. One of Taggart's strategies was to make connections in the community to gain name recognition for his company.

Lancaster Business TEAM, Ira Wolfe of Success Performance Solutions, Leola, and New Holland Custom Woodwork Ltd., New Holland, are among his local contacts.

The New Holland connection came about indirectly. Taggart said a salesman at WDAC 94.5 FM, a Christian radio station in Lancaster, had contracted New Holland Church Furniture to sell advertising.

The radio ad rep knew about Fredrick & Emily's because the rep and Taggart are involved in Lancaster Business

TEAM, a group of business owners in Lancaster County that have weekly networking sessions. He told New Holland Custom Woodwork about Fredrick and Emily's niche.

Don Long, president of New Holland Custom Woodwork, said his company and Taggart's have been working together formally since the beginning of 2000. If Long's company meets with church officials who want furniture restored rather than replaced, Long refers them to Taggart, and vice-versa.

"(Furniture restoration) is a totally separate kind of business, and a business we would not have interest in," said Long. So the relationship is mutually beneficial.

Reputation in this field is especially important, Taggart said. A reputation for poor-quality work can spread quickly, and companies can be shut out of contracts for an entire diocese or parish, because these groups control which companies work at the churches in their regions.

Another part of the network is Ira Wolfe, president of Success Performance Solutions, who helped Taggart redefine Fredrick and Emily's.

Taggart met Wolfe through Lancaster

Business TEAM. Wolfe helped him decide last summer to narrow his focus to church furniture restoration.

"We took him where his passion was, and helped bring him forward and bring closure to his past history," said Wolfe.

The most important part of Wolfe's consulting was to help Taggart pull the resources together to further develop the church-furniture niche. Wolfe also pointed out the barriers to success, such as the emotional attachment to the company his father had started.

"One of the first things we started with was to try to sit down with Fredrick and Karen (Fredrick's wife) and find out what they were really passionate about," Wolfe said. "If they had no barriers, what would they be doing?"

"He had had huge success in church restoration, but he was torn about letting go of the past. He didn't want to let it go yet, because he wasn't certain the church restoration would continue. So we sat them down and helped them figure out how to grow the church side of the business.

"As the church side grew busier and busier, he was less interested in the commercial-residential side of it," said Wolfe.

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