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**SHOWCASE COMPONENTS
IS ON THE CASE**



Quality means doing it right when no one is looking.

– Henry Ford

Shining a Light on Showcase Components

by Rob Bryant, editor of Business World

A prolonged downturn in the fixtures manufacturing industry, as we've currently witnessed during this "Great Recession," can be downright Darwinian. It has created a new species of component provider that gains nourishment through the relaxation of construction standards.

Ken Lockwood, vice president of Southern California-based Showcase Components, Inc. (SCI) is a veteran observer of this sliding scale of values during a recession; but not a participant. He fears that what ultimately becomes

"business as usual" by some in his industry will negatively impact everyone in it.

"Showcase has always taken great pride in looking at the big picture," Lockwood explains. "We are firm believers that any compromise will cost you in the long run. That's one reason we don't import any materials and specify only the best."

Not allowing mediocrity to prevail

Both those assisting and resisting this evolution to mediocrity have found their sales in decline for well over a dozen quarters.

Many have gone out of business under the strain.

The good news is that those who persisted in excellence will most likely be rewarded by the anticipated higher tide in capital expenditures that is expected to raise all boats in the retail sea. In its January 22 issue, *Associated Retail Environments* reports a positive view from the supplier side. It reads in part:

After a steep decline in sales of 22 percent in 2009, the ARE member companies rebounded with 9.4 percent growth in 2010; an estimated 10 percent growth in 2011; and now a projection for an additional

growth of 10 percent in 2012.

Basically, Showcase plans to do what it did to survive in the down cycle to thrive in the improving one. As the company name indicates, Showcase Components, Inc. designs and manufactures custom components for retail displays including kiosks.

It's all-aluminum or wood-end frames and energy-efficient LED lighting systems are found in the displays of the leading retail chains and independents in the country, including Costco, Big 5 Sporting Goods, Petco and La Curacao.

Assuring quality with a 100% guarantee

Located in the Los Angeles suburb of Paramount, SCI has survived the 3-year industry-wide downturn in orders by proving its value rather than running its principles aground. Resisting the opportunities to cut corners through materials and workmanship enables it to provide a 100% product guarantee.

According to Lockwood, value has many facets. In his estimation, they are led by quality but not limited to it. For example, he points to the company's turnaround time.

"We believe that being responsive under all circumstances brings value," Lockwood defined. "Good turnaround begins with providing a timely quote, not just in delivering the order within five days."

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Earl Phares, senior design engineer for PIN (*Professional Installation Network*) in Texas, confirms Lockwood's priorities and also recognizes the quality inherent in every component received. "I feel I get a better response in all phases of a project, from quoting to final assembly, by Showcase Components," assessed the 20-year veteran of fixture wars.

"Showcase is able to react to all size orders we send them," he added, "from one or two units, to runs of five hundred or one thousand. Most times I will receive a quote the same day I request it and they have always met the requested ship date, regardless of quantity."

The cost of cutting corners

Not all Showcase customers are major players like PIN. Some have looked to take shortcuts during the downturn, having Showcase provide extruded aluminum lengths then cutting to size in their wood shop without the proper tools. In most cases, the

outcome is predictable and unfortunate.

In one instance, a fixture manufacturer bypassed SCI and installed the display lighting without considering how the LED bulb would be accessed when replacement was necessary.

Showcase anticipates that eventuality by utilizing standard fluorescent built installation that requires less than five minutes of a clerk's time to address the same problem on the store floor.

PIN's Phares believes Showcase productivity goes far beyond the basics, however.

"I have also worked with them on creative ways to make their product work with our casework in order to give our clients the look they seek," he explained.

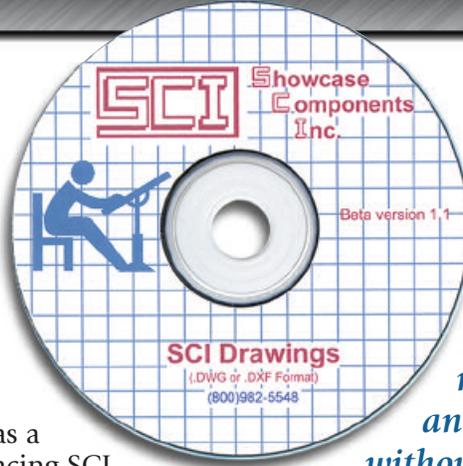
One such request was to have a glass top that opened. Phares felt the request was beyond his experience but not that of Showcase engineering. His confidence was soon rewarded with a custom glass counter that opened pre-



cisely as the retail customer had envisioned. In an effort to encourage and facilitate custom component designs, SCI offers a DVD that provides specifications for sliding door systems, case configurations and lighting systems. It's a valuable design tool according to Vince Funk, operations manager for Northcoast Woodcrafts in Ohio.

"I've saved it onto my CAD app as a guide tool," he said. "It facilitates placing SCI components, like its 252 light or track for doors, directly into my design. This saves time in quoting the overall job to our customers as well as designing it."

A customer for almost 20 years, Vince typically specifies SCI's entire assembly from lights to front glass channel top and wrapped



door assembly. He also requires custom work like hinged drop down doors, which he acknowledges isn't rocket science, but does require the expertise he can count on from SCI engineers.

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The DVD is available by contacting SCI at: sales@showcasecomponents.com

Jack Loudermill is another chronicler of SCI quality. The operations manager for Nakamura-Beeman, Inc. for 31 years, he has been a customer of SCI nearly that long. "We have never bothered to try any other showcase fabricators," he acknowledged. "We have always received quality product, on time and for a fair price."

Among the products SCI provides Nakamura are showcase kits, pass-thru door kits and hinged -door frames.

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