

## 'Green' Countertop Option

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particleboard used to manufacture these countertops found formaldehyde emissions are no greater than levels occurring in outdoor ambient air conditions."

### FULLY TESTED

The new particleboard core, which is manufactured by Roseburg Forest Products under the SkyBlend™ brand, has been fully tested by VT for laminating, cutting and machining, Pack noted. Available in industrial grade only, SkyBlend meets or exceeds all industry standards for M3+ particleboard.

"We have fully tested the particleboard's performance on our production lines and there were no issues whatsoever," Pack reported. "You can order this particleboard with any of our existing profiles by specifying a VT countertop utilizing Roseburg SkyBlend™ brand particleboard."

Roseburg Forest Products has provided particleboard to VT Industries for decades, Pack said. "When we opened our Oregon plant in the early '90s, Roseburg was a primary source of particleboard and remains so to this day."

Roseburg owns more than 300,000 acres of timberland that is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) as meeting international environmental standards through appropriate conservation of the forest's economic resources.

In addition, Roseburg has Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), a third-party testing organization, audit its manufacturing process.

### LEED FEATURES

LEED is the predominant rating system for evaluating and developing high-performance, sustainable buildings. Members



SkyBlend™ brand particleboard has been fully tested by VT for laminating, cutting and machining.

of the U.S. Green Building Council representing all segments of the building industry developed LEED and continue to contribute to its evolution.

VT countertops can assist in achieving LEED certification in two categories: Materials and

Resources and Indoor Environmental Quality based on LEED for New Construction Version 2.1 (See Table 1).

The intent of LEED Materials and Resources requirements is to increase the use of products that incorporate recycled content material. SkyBlend Particleboard cores are SCS certified to be 100 percent consumer recycled wood fiber.

With seven countertop production plants throughout North America, most shipments will also qualify for regional materials credit. VT has plants in Bryan, Texas; Gardena, Calif.; Montreal, Quebec, Canada; Rome, Ga.; Roseburg, Ore.; Sac City, Iowa; and Shelbyville, Ind. VT can assist with regional materials credits if the job is within 500 miles of the VT facility where it was manufactured.

The intent of LEED Indoor Environmental Quality requirements is to reduce the quantity of air contaminants that are odorous or potentially irritating to the comfort and health of fabricators, installers and occupants. Countertops made from particleboard cores with no urea-formaldehyde resins added during manufacturing meet the requirement for low-emitting composite wood materials.

VT countertops also meet the LEED requirement for low-emitting adhesives and sealants by using a water-based adhesive that eliminates VOCs (volatile organic compounds) and other hazardous air pollutants.

In addition, VT uses Greenguard-certified laminates from major brands such as Formica®, Wilsonart® and Nevamar®. Greenguard only certifies products that are low-emitting.

### READY TO ORDER

SkyBlend Particleboard will be stocked on the floor of VT manufacturing plants, making it readily available. Typically, countertops featuring low-emitting SkyBlend particleboard will require no additional lead time, although architects and specifiers should allow extra time for large orders, Pack said.

In addition to previewing the product at the International Builders Show, VT will feature it at the AIA Show in Los Angeles and at the Kitchen and Bath Show in Chicago.

"At VT Industries, we're constantly adapting our manufacturing techniques to ensure environmental responsibility. With this new generation of low-emitting particleboard, architects and specifiers now have a high-quality, environmentally friendly countertop that can help them earn LEED credits including recycled content, regional materials and low-emitting materials," Pack added.

## Plant Profile

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the same year the company was purchased by VT Industries. Another production line dedicated to thermoplastic doors and wood cabinet doors operates 16 hours a day.

Doors are manufactured from a medium density fiberboard (MDF) core with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) on the front and edges. "We offer 84 different door profiles in whatever size the customer wants and special mullion doors in 45 colors and finishes," Ravary noted. "We can go all the way up to a 4 x 8 foot door if it's needed and we deliver within a maximum of 10 working days."

Ravary and his staff monitor market trends through active involvement with industry organizations like the Canadian Kitchen Cabinet Association. "On the cabinet side we're noticing that thermoplastic doors are being used everywhere around the home, including the garage where they're used for storage," Ravary said. "We can imitate stainless steel and diamond plate aluminum in thermal plastic and that's what we're seeing used in garages."

In all of its operations, the Belanger plant uses the latest postforming technology similar to other VT manufacturing facilities, Ravary added.

## VT Industries Announces Promotions of Dan Barkema and Chris Jones



Dan Barkema



Chris Jones

VT Industries recently promoted Dan Barkema and Chris Jones to new positions to strengthen VT's leadership roles with the top two home improvement retailers.

Dan Barkema has been promoted to strategic alliance administrator and will assist Lowe's and VT on their Strategic Alliance Partnership as the sole vendor supplying Belanger countertops for all of their stock countertops.

Chris Jones has been promoted to account administrator and will be dedicated to The Home Depot national account in his new position. VT is the exclusive provider of The Home Depot's stock postformed laminate countertops.

VT Industries currently services approximately 1,800 The Home Depots, and 1,100 Lowe's store locations. "During 2006, the combined total store locations supplied by VT will exceed 3,200 nationally for both The Home Depot and Lowe's," according to John Bowling, vice president of home center sales.

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# COUNTERTOPICS

A Marketing/Communications Publication

## Perspectives

By Catherine Wilcke  
Marketing Communications Manager



Congratulations to Tech Products of Nashville, winner of this year's trip to the Pro Bowl in Hawaii, February 10-13, 2006. There

were 176 customers included in the drawing, with a total of 362 chances – a terrific response to our Wilsonart DeepStar promotion.

Bruce Lindsey, operations manager for Tech Products of Nashville, and his wife Sherry are looking forward to the trip. Bob Flournoy, region manager, nominated Bruce for his ongoing efforts to keep everything going at Tech Products.

Tech Products of Nashville ordered more than 1,300 lineal feet of DeepStar for 50 displays throughout the central Tennessee



Bob Flournoy

area. The company, which has eight branch locations throughout Florida, hosted an employee luncheon celebration at its Nashville location to recognize them as the winner of our promotion.

We would also like to recognize our representatives with the top sales during this promotion. They are, in order, 1) Rich Vierra, northwest U.S. 2) Jim Sachs, northern Midwest, and 3) Rodney Dowling, southeast U.S.

## Recalling 50 Years of Growth, Innovation And Technological Leadership



Roger Clausen

From its humble beginnings in 1956 as a two-man shop specializing in vanity tops, VT Industries has grown to become a leader in the postformed decorative laminate countertop and architectural wood door industries.

Fueling this growth has been an aggressive policy of product innovation, technological leadership, and a fundamental commitment to customer service that originated with company founder Roger Clausen.

"Years ago, we were a little upstart and the architects didn't always trust that we could handle the big jobs we took on, but we got them done," Clausen recalled. "We always stood behind our work and if it wasn't right, we made it right."

### THEN AND NOW

In its early days, shipping custom countertops to customers by truck proved to be a major challenge that led company founder Roger Clausen to a solution that would shape the future direction of the company.

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## VT Offers 'Green' Countertop Option With Low-Emitting Particleboard Core

At this year's International Builders Show in Orlando, VT Industries will debut a new countertop option that uses low-emitting particleboard cores that contribute toward achieving credits under the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™. VT environmental countertops are available as an option, so customers must specify this product at the time of entry.

"This is a product that an architect or specifier wants if they're pursuing a LEED certification in a residential or commercial application," according to Jay Pack, VT western regional sales manager. "Third party testing of the

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## COUNTERTOPICS TRIVIA

Congratulations to Mr. Glenn Cox of Alpine Sales, Inc., for the correct answer to the question: "When did VT Industries introduce its online ordering system, VTonline?" Mr. Cox won a VT jacket for his answer.

### QUESTION:

#### What was VT Industries called when it was founded in 1956?

Answer this question based on this issue of the *CounterTopics* for a chance to win a VT prize. Place your answer on an index card with your complete contact information, or the back of your business card, and mail to the address listed. Entries must be postmarked by February 28, 2006. Limit one entry per person, and one winning per year.

*CounterTopics* Trivia • Attn: Amanda Paulsen • VT Industries Inc. • P.O. Box 490 • Holstein, IA 51025

VT employees and sales representatives are excluded from this promotion.



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\*VT can assist with regional materials credits if a job is within 500 miles of a VT manufacturing facility.

## Recalling 50 Years

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"We had a customer in Rochester, Minnesota, that had a contract for more than a hundred houses," Clausen noted. "He built the kitchen cabinets and we provided the countertops with the sink holes cut out and everything assembled.

"When our first shipment of countertops arrived by truck, they were broken. We finally figured out that we would send blank countertops to his cabinet shop where he would customize them, take them to the jobsite on his own truck and install them. That was the birth of what we call the 'blank business,'" Clausen explained.



Doug Clausen

Building on the success of his father, company president and CEO Doug Clausen is charting a strategy for future growth and success. "Whether it is new products, new plants, or new technology,

we are continually looking for ways to increase our value to the customers we serve," according to Doug Clausen.

Throughout 2006, this newsletter will recount 50 years of growth and achievement in a series of articles and photographs, beginning with the three-page timeline below.

As part of our anniversary celebration, we invite our customers to share any stories or insight they have of VT Industries from its early days to present time. Please send your recollections to [apaulsen@vtindustries.com](mailto:apaulsen@vtindustries.com).

## Fabricators Forum

For more than 18 years, Atlanta-based Meyer Decorative Services has supported its wide customer base with value-added services and programs like its new quick ship postformed laminate countertop display board which was introduced last year.

The 2-foot by 3-foot plastic board provides a visual overview of VT edge profiles, a pocket for holding Meyer countertop brochures, and space for hanging dozens of laminate chips stocked by each of the company's 12 locations.

According to Meyer Senior Vice President of Sales, Terry Miller, "In this business, the company with the most samples wins. This is a way to visually demonstrate the wide selection of in-stock samples we have to offer our customers."

"The beauty of the board is that we can modify it to suit each of our locations. In Atlanta, for example, we fill up the board with 60 sets of different color samples that we keep in stock," Miller noted. "Our customers comment that they appreciate the immediate access they have to such a wide selection. It also allows their customers who are buying the countertop to take chips home so they can match them to other interior colors."

Once a decision is made on the edge profile and color selection, Meyer usually can fabricate a countertop within three days or less in most cases.

"Our ability to exceed the expectations of our customers has made us one of the largest postformed countertop fabricators in the kitchen and bath industry," Miller added.

Meyer Decorative Surfaces is a division of Saint-Gobain, a worldwide leader in the manufacture and distribution of building materials with operations in 45 countries.

Meyer has locations in Little Rock, Ark.; Atlanta, Ga.; Columbus, Ga.; Savannah, Ga.; Nashville, Tenn.; Augusta, Ga.; Macon, Ga.; Chattanooga, Tenn.; Charlotte, N.C.; Wilmington, N.C.; Kernersville, N.C.; Roanoke, Va.



The compact display board provides space for (from top to bottom) 60 sets of color samples, a supply of Meyer Laminate Stock Countertops brochures, standard depth information, and illustrations of VT edge profiles.

## New Orleans Fabricator Rebuilds In Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina

As the worst hurricane season in U.S. history has come to an end, residents and businesses across the Gulf Coast are beginning to rebuild. According to the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Hurricane Katrina is recorded as the costliest hurricane since 1992, and the deadliest since 1928.

"I'm looking forward to the day when life resumes to some sort of normalcy," said Paul Mattix, president of Mattix Cabinets, a VT PRO Team fabricator.

### WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

One week after Hurricane Katrina hit the New Orleans area, Mattix Cabinets was able to inspect their three showrooms across the greater metropolitan area of New Orleans. They found at least eight inches of water in two of the locations and more than 75 percent of their inventory damaged.



More than 75 percent of the inventory at two locations was damaged.

"We were able to stay busy by finishing up new homes that were not affected by the hurricane despite all of the damage in the hard hit areas," Mattix noted.

The company's customers come from a 70-mile radius around New Orleans. In addition to providing postformed laminate countertops, the 60-year-old company specializes in kitchen cabinets for the residential market in addition to apartment complexes, office and industrial buildings.

"The people and companies who are committed will do what is necessary in times like these," Mattix said.

"We were hit very hard, and those who were not hit as hard really helped us out," Mattix said. Soon after the hurricane, facilities that were not affected by the storm were quickly bought or leased.

Mattix Cabinets was able to continue business with the help of Joey Scontrino of Lancraft Homes, allowing them to use part of their warehouse until they were able to find space to lease.

**'The people and companies who are committed will do what is necessary in times like these.'**

Tommy Coleman, VT Industries southwest regional sales manager, was able to assist Mattix in finding a used saw for cutting countertops.

Mattix is very grateful for his crew of loyal, dedicated employees who have helped with all the cleaning out and remodeling of the three showrooms since the hurricane. "It has taken major dedication from some very good employees," Mattix affirmed.

### TIME TO REBUILD

"Our business will increase many-fold just helping people in the least hard hit areas," Mattix said. He expects the whole complexion of New Orleans will change over the next three years as major homebuilders move into the area.

It is estimated that home building will be up more than 300 percent over the next three years. "I'm seeing a need for the laminate industry to use Wilsonart® DeepStar with VT's Futura or Nova profiles for the look of stone at a good price," Mattix said.

Mattix Cabinets has evolved from a manufacturer to a fabricator, cabinet and appliance distributor. Mattix's father was a pioneer with the postforming machine and they continue to see the importance of laminate countertops.

Surviving and rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina will take time. "It's good for business, but difficult emotionally and physically," Mattix added.

## Plant Profile: Belanger Laminés/Laminates, Inc.



Location: Boucherville, Quebec, Canada

Size: 110,000 square feet

Employees: 200

Phone: 450-449-3447

Fax: 450-449-7200

General Manager: Dennis Ravary

Production Manager: Serge Gagne

Customer Service Manager: Danielle Roussel

### EUROPEAN INFLUENCE

Belanger's creative team draws many of its ideas for countertop colors and textures from European designs, which heavily influence the Canadian market, according to Ravary. "In Canada, where there's roughly 30 million people, our customers are very demanding, so our creative team attends major European exhibitions to find new colors and textures," he reported.

People today are more daring in their use of colors, Ravary noted. "Instead of plain white countertops, they're bringing more colors into their kitchens and bathrooms."

Ravary credits television shows on home renovation, such as *This Old House* and *Trading Spaces*, for educating people about color matching and home decoration. "People are coming into home centers and to kitchen dealers with an idea of what they want," he said.

Belanger countertop models come with or without a backsplash in standard 8', 10' and 12' lengths. The plant offers flexibility in matching special width requirements, which tend to vary from one region to another, Ravary said.

### LATEST TECHNOLOGY

To keep up with demand, Belanger operates three countertop lines at its 110,000 square foot plant which opened in 1998 –

From its modest beginnings in 1965 with a 20,000 square foot manufacturing plant, Belanger Laminates VT Industries Inc., has grown over the years to become the leading manufacturer of postformed countertops and components serving Canada and the Northeast U.S. regional market.

Today, the Belanger product line features a selection of 10 countertop models available in more than 430 laminate colors and finishes, including several patterns designed exclusively for Belanger by major laminate manufacturers, according to company general manager, Dennis Ravary

"Our newest Kaleidoscope Collection resembles granite infused with pieces of colored quartz," Ravary explained. "The name comes from the unique optical patterns created when pieces of colored glass are rotated inside a kaleidoscope."

Other laminate designs available only from Belanger include:

- A contemporary collection that creates a mosaic effect against rich colors such as jade and gold
- An Earth Collection inspired by natural elements
- A Cloud Collection resembling "a morning mist" with touches of blue, pink, green and burgundy
- Designer patterns with an exotic, adventurous appeal.

## VT Industries Historical Highlights

### 1956-2006

#### 1956

→ Van-Top, Inc., Holstein, Iowa, is founded by Roger Clausen.

#### 1958

→ Architectural door business is started in a rented chicken coop in Holstein, Iowa.

"We could press 28 doors a day, or about 100 doors a week if we were lucky." – Roger Clausen

#### 1962

→ Roger Clausen starts making customer calls in his Piper Comanche 250.

#### 1964

→ Company moves into a new 55,000 square foot plant north of Holstein.

"We have great employees who take pride in what they do and they do it well." – Roger Clausen

#### 1977

→ Doug Clausen becomes general manager of company's first branch postforming plant in Houston, Texas.

"Every business is a penny business – I think that's the first lesson I learned in business, probably from my father." – Doug Clausen

#### 1980

→ VTI of Indiana postforming plant opens in Shelbyville.

#### 1982

→ Door operation in Holstein is revamped with trimmers, edge-cutting and edge-banding machines, hot presses and material handling equipment imported from Germany and Italy.  
"Through the years, VT has strengthened its business by listening to customers as they require faster delivery and better service." – Doug Clausen

#### 1983

→ Postforming plant moves from Houston to Bryan, Texas.

#### 1989

→ Doug Clausen becomes company president.

#### 1987

→ A door core composer is installed in the Holstein manufacturing plant.

#### 1990

→ U.V. cured flat finishing line is installed in Holstein, Iowa; VTI Georgia postforming plant opens.

#### 1992

→ VT Industries is named Woodworking Machinery Importer Association's Innovator of the Year; acquires V-T Inc., in Roseburg, Oregon.

#### 1997

→ The company's first AIA/CES presentation under a joint venture hosted by Georgia CSI and Georgia AIA.

#### 1995

→ VT of Iowa relocates from Holstein to Sac City, Iowa.

"We were years ahead of the industry in eliminating solvent-based countertop adhesives and going to water-based PVA." – Doug Clausen

#### 1998

→ VT Industries acquires Belanger Laminates, Inc. in Boucherville, Quebec, Canada.

#### 2002

→ Sani-Top, Inc. becomes V-T Inc., West postforming plant in Gardena, California

#### 2005

→ Roger Clausen inducted into the Kitchen and Bath Industry Hall of Fame.

"Much of my management style and success in business I've learned from my father and we've made a great team for many years." – Doug Clausen