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## Northland Forest Product's Planer Gives Lumber Added Dimension

By Karen Koenig | Posted: 02/24/2015 1:43PM

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Investments in technology are nothing new for Northland Forest Products Inc. In recent years, the Shakopee, MN-based company has invested \$1.8 million in high-tech equipment to optimize the production of its hardwood moulding and dimension lumber.

Northland won a 2012 WMIA Wooden Globe for "Commitment to Excellence through Technology and Innovation for upgrades made to its moulding line.

Soon after, the focus shifted to improving the yield on the company's S4S dimension lumber, says President Dick Pyle.

"We were approached in 2012 by Gary Besonen from Timesavers to partner with them in developing a true self centering, opposing head, and high-speed planer," recalls Pyle. "Together, with their engineers and our desire to invest in new technology, we would build a new design to increase yields and profits."

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The new design also allowed for “a better look” with the company’s Ulti-Vision high-resolution scanner. “It was the missing link in our total rough mill design,” Pyle says.

In March 2014 Northland installed the Timesavers Yield Saver-24 planer on its S4S hardwood lumber operation, replacing an older top and bottom insert planer.

“A traditional planer will always take a fixed cut on the bottom and finish the board, at the desired thickness, with the top head. The Northfield 240 planer that we were using planed the boards in this fashion. It did a good job on flat lumber, but if it was cupped it would remove more material from one side and make it more difficult to process, which resulted in yield loss,” Pyle explains.

The Yield Saver has been in place for approximately one year, and already the company has averaged 1.5 percent in yield savings on 4 million feet of lumber. “Based on an average price of all FAS species that we process, we will pay for the new machine in a little under two years,” Pyle says. “It has been an excellent investment.”

Winner of a 2014 Challengers Award, the Yield Saver-24 has a throughput speed of 225 fpm. “Our old machine had a maximum of 120 fpm, so the increased speed has also allowed for increased production. We have all of the speed we need if we want to go fast.”

Tied to the new housing market, Northland’s S4S hardwood lumber sales grew in 2014, and 2015 sales are also bright. “We can see the S4S side of our business increasing to 50 percent of our total business, up from 40 percent,” Pyle says.

#### Return on Investments

In assessing new technologies, Pyle says the company tries to realize a 24-month return on investment. “Technology changes very fast so we need a quick ROI to reinvest again and again.”

The upgrading of the dimension line follows on the heels of Northland’s extensive investments in its lineal moulding cell. An integrated manufacturing management system, the cell includes: two Weinig Powermat 1000 HSK moulders, a Rondamat grinder, Raimann Valu Rip KM and KR rip saws, and the Ultimizer Ulti-Vision four-sided scanning system. Also added were Timesavers 52-inch sanders and MillVision Pro 2.0 software which seamlessly networks and tracks each area of the 60,000-square-foot plant via laptops at each machine station.


Additional equipment in the plant includes: a Grecon fingerjointing line, Dimter optimizing chop line, Friulmac end matcher, Taylor clamp system, Baker resaw, Cantek and SawStop saws and Cresswood grinders.

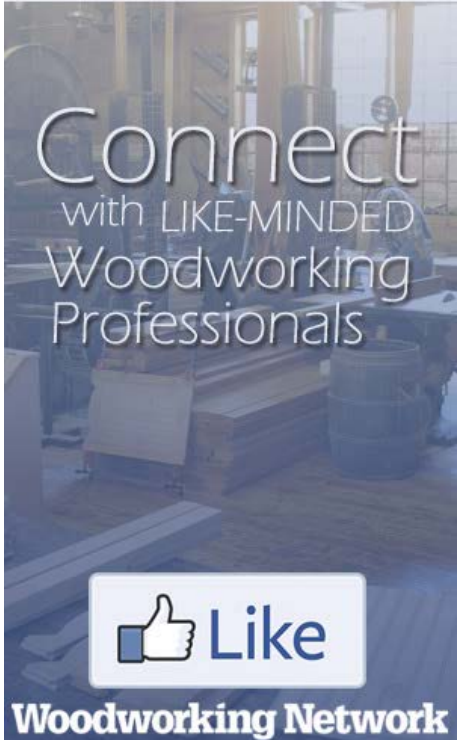
And while Pyle notes that past investments have kept the company “in the game with increased sales and profits,” he continues to look for ways to improve. “Having now spent \$1.8 million on new equipment and technologies we continue to look for new opportunities to partner with OEM manufactures to improve their business and ours,” he says.

“We have expanded our sales area and are bringing more high quality products to the marketplace,” Pyle says of the company he founded with his wife Shari back in 1979.

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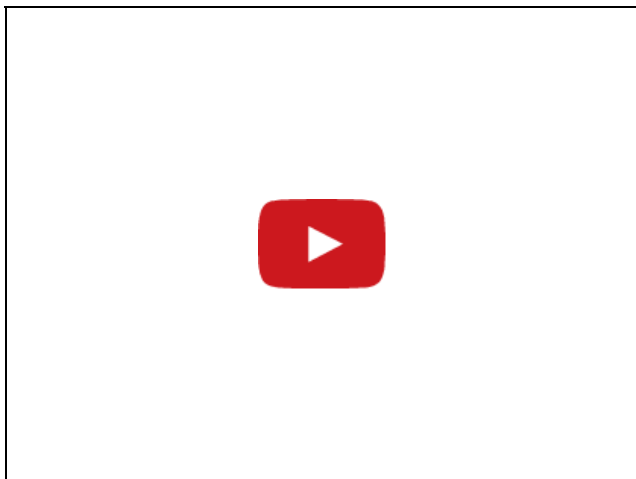
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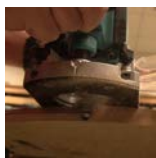
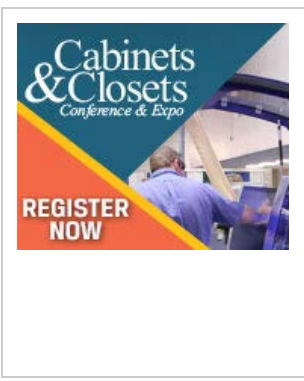




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**About the Author**



**Karen M. Koenig**  
 Karen M. Koenig has more than 25 years of experience in the woodworking industry, including visits to wood products manufacturing facilities throughout North America, Europe and Asia. As Editor-in-Chief of Woodworking Network magazine (formerly Wood & Wood Products), Karen's primary responsibilities include spearheading the writing, editing and coordinating of the editorial content of the publication, along with the Red Book resource guide and the Red Book online source and supply directory ([RedBookOnline.com](#)). She is also a frequent contributor to other Woodworking Network online and print media. She can be reached at [kkoenig@woodworkingnetwork.com](mailto:kkoenig@woodworkingnetwork.com) or

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