

ISFA FABRICATOR PROFILE: The Pinske Edge



The Pinske Edge is a Minnesota-based designer and fabricator of surfaces in multiple materials, including natural stone, quartz, solid surface and specialty surfaces. The company designs, fabricates and installs everything from countertops to retail displays, shelving, vanity tops, kitchen tops, conference room tables, shower pans and enclosures, window sills, wall cladding, furniture and just about any project using premium surface that can be dreamed up.

Forging a Different Path

While the company's story started out much like other early solid surface fabricators, The Pinske Edge chose a much different path and is far from the typical fabricator. CEO Tom Pinske founded the company in Plato, Minn., and was among the earliest fabricators to work with solid surface. However, Pinske found the proper tools for working with solid surface to be lacking. It all started with a straight edge, or rather the lack of one. He realized almost immediately that woodworking tools did not provide the cutting accuracy and precision he required for his finished products. Because fabrication tools designed specifically for solid surface did not exist at that time, Pinske decided to design and build his own solution. As a result, the edges and seams of his countertops became virtually perfect. Other fabricators, having seen the remarkable results of his tools, asked if he was willing to begin mass producing and selling them in the marketplace. This is where The Pinske Edge split from the usual path and branched out with a tool division.

Now, 31 years later, The Pinske Edge has three divisions and is widely recognized for its high quality, excellent customer service and innovative solutions.

Tools Division

Originally established as an independent company under the name “The Pinske Edge,” the tools arm of the company grew from a small Midwestern company to a world-renowned supplier of solid surface fabrication equipment. This division also offers training videos and other fabricator educational materials. In 2013, the Glencoe Area Chamber of Commerce named The Pinske Edge “Manufacturer of the Year” and honored Tom Pinske for his significant role in supporting the solid surface fabrication industry across the Midwest.

Commercial and Residential Divisions

The other two divisions center around fabrication markets, with one focusing on commercial work and the other being the company’s residential division. These fabrication arms of the company were initially established in 1976 in Plato under the name “Plato Home Center,” which later became “Plato Custom Concepts.” The original facility includes a showroom, design center and fabrication shop where solid surface countertops for kitchens and baths are designed and fabricated. They are also the area dealer for Plato Woodwork Custom Cabinetry. In 2014, the company opened a new location in Rochester, Minn., which offers natural stone and quartz products to the residential and commercial markets.

Both locations specialize in the retail, healthcare, education, hospitality and residential markets and offer a wide variety of products. The Pinske Edge reaches the market through association with retail display designers, engineers, architects, millhouses, builders, general contractors, kitchen & bath dealers, and direct sales to homeowners.

The company’s fabrication divisions have a nationwide service area, and its customers benefit from its breadth of capabilities and materials, craftsmanship, high-volume production and short turnaround times.

Solid surface and hard surfacing each account for about half of the company’s business. “Stone and engineered quartz jobs are generated mostly by builders, kitchen & bath dealers, and walk-ins to our showroom,” explained Sales Manager Cindy Eggersgluess. “Solid surface work, on the

other hand, comes from a variety of sources, chief among them are general contractors, millwork houses, retail fixturing companies and a few walk-ins.”

A New Name and New Owners

In 2016, the company rebranded all divisions/locations under the name “The Pinske Edge,” combining its operations under a new brand identity whose tag line is “Excellence from Every Angle.” This rebranding effort was a natural evolution that allows the company to better align its capabilities and products with its core markets and provide increased value and service to its customers every day.

However, in 2016 The Pinske Edge took another step that is far from common in the industry. It became a 100 percent employee-owned company under an employee stock ownership plan (ESOP).

“Becoming a company that is 100 percent owned by our employees is probably the most significant event in the history of The Pinske Edge,” said Company President Scott Nelson. “In addition to being personally invested in the success of our customers and the well-being of The Pinske Edge, our employees are highly motivated to consistently produce the highest quality products and go above and beyond in innovation, growth initiatives and exceptional service.”

“Because all of the employees helped the business get to where it is today, I wanted to turn the business into a 100 percent employee-owned business,” added Pinske. “I didn’t want to sell the business and possibly have it move out of the area.”

As an ESOP company, management continues to run the business under the guidance of a board of directors. The employee owners in turn have a stake in the outcome of the business. Stock is allocated each year into their accounts, so as the company grows, the value of their stock grows. This vested interest by the 28 workers the company employs means they work hard for their customers and focus on personal attention, flexibility, exceptional service, quality and exceeding customers’ expectations. This leads to some amazingly short turnaround times (such as

completing a 48,000-sq.-ft. project in just two months) and leveraging in-house expertise to expand capabilities to meet any challenge.

This has also led to making sure they have the right equipment for the job. Among the tools at their disposal, employees have a Komo Twin-Spindle CNC Router with a 60- by 155-in. table; a Streibig Vertical Panel Saw; PhotoTop Templating Systems; Jib Cranes; a v-grooving machine; several pieces of equipment from Park Industries, such as a Titan CNC Router, Fusion WaterJet Saw, Pathfinder and Wizard; as well as a Northwoods CNC machine and access to all of the various material handling, seaming, edging and other equipment available from The Pinske Edge itself.

Philosophy for Success

When asked about the company's philosophy for success, the managerial team had solid answers that complemented each other.

"We like to be a one-stop shop for our customers and supply whatever they need," said Eggersgluess. "Our quality is unsurpassed, our pricing is competitive and we will deliver product on time."

"No project is too large or too small," said Nelson. "Always put your customer first and value-engineer your projects."

And when asked what advice he would offer after putting three decades of experience under his belt, Pinske replied, "Remember where you came from and treat everyone the way you want to be treated."

That mind-set has brought The Pinske Edge a long way, and is certainly one that will continue to lead the organization firmly into the future.

More information on The Pinske Edge is available at www.pinske-edge.com or by calling (800) 874-6753.