



Profiles of Technology
IN TENNESSEE

Smoky Mountain Woodshop Goes High Tech

Name:

Smoky Mountain Woodworks

Internet:

www.smokymountainwoodworks.com

Products/Services:

High-end, custom furniture

Location:

Edwina/Cocke County

Leadership:

Doug & Marie Bittenger,
Owners and Operators

Reach: National

Innovative Insight: *“People can do all sorts of things with broadband. You can make a living working from your own home over the Internet.”*

The Importance of

Broadband: *“It would take us over a week to do major upgrades using dial-up. A process that should take 20 minutes takes two hours. Having a broadband connection would ease my life a great deal. I could get more work done!”*

Impact of the Web site:

99% of their revenue comes from online sales.

Edwina, TN - The phrase “high tech” probably wouldn’t be the first that came to mind should you ever pass by the quaint little woodshop in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains, but don’t let appearances fool you. Smoky Mountain Woodworks, owned and operated by Doug and Marie Bittenger, combines technology with old-fashioned values to maintain a highly successful online furniture company.

The couple started their business ten years ago, combining their mutual love of the Smoky Mountains with Doug’s 25 years of furniture-making experience and Marie’s background as a designer and seamstress. The website, www.smokymountainwoodworks.com, was launched in 1999 and today, brings in 99% of their business, a fact that still surprises Doug. “It just blows me away that people will order high-end, custom furniture over the Internet,” he says.

Visitors to the site can order handmade beds, cradles, benches, chairs, shelves and much more, while enjoying the website’s quaint, rustic backdrop. “The website doesn’t look really high tech or flashy, and I did that on purpose,” explains Doug. “Behind the scenes, though, is a huge database. Customers can get an actual, online, real-time estimate of how much a piece of furniture is.” And that’s not all. Through Doug’s “In the Shop Notes,” clients can watch their furniture being made – as it happens! Doug posts pictures at the end of each day, detailing the progression of the projects he is working on, along with a daily production schedule.

Unfortunately, broadband technology is not currently available in Doug’s area of Cocke County, and he is able to do only routine maintenance to the website himself, using a dial-up connection. The majority of updates to the website are handled by a database programmer in Montana, who does have access to broadband. “It would take us over a week to do major upgrades using dial-up,” explains Doug. “A process that should take 20 minutes takes two hours. Having a broadband connection would ease my life a great deal. I could get more work done!”

Doug’s situation is a good illustration of how important the eCommunity Leadership process really is. And even though he doesn’t yet have access to broadband, Doug is still a big believer in its potential to change lives.

“People can do all sorts of things with broadband,” he says. “You can make a living working from your own home over the Internet.”

About TN 95:

Citizens across the state are using technology in innovative ways to ensure that Tennessee remains the place of choice to live, work and raise a family. Connected Tennessee is profiling businesses and Tennesseans in each of the state’s 95 counties to identify lessons learned on the path to successful innovation. For more information visit our Web site at www.connectedtn.org or call 615-242-9508.