

Southern Lumber & Millwork Wins Andersen 2014 Dealer of the Year Award for Top Customer Service

Founded in 1941 and based in Charleston, SC, Southern Lumber & Millwork is a family-owned full-service lumber yard and independent building materials dealer offering a wide selection of windows, doors, framing kits, moulding and other custom millwork products. The company's customers include professional architects and custom builders as well as homeowners who are remodeling and need specialty work. Southern Lumber & Millwork is noted for its custom millwork department and its ability to run special moulding and trim packages. State-of-the-art technology and computerized equipment allows the company to do what other dealers simply cannot. From matching historic trim mouldings to creating something new and unique for new home construction, Southern's design team has been doing it for over 75 years.

The business is presently managed by the Albrecht family and there are other several family ties among Southern Lumber's 85 full-time employees. Some of the earliest employees of the company passed their knowledge on to their sons and daughters, who now work at the company in sales, bookkeeping and in the yard. Several employees have been with the company well over 25 years.

Southern Lumber & Millwork has been using the Ponderosa ERP software for almost five years.

“With Ponderosa’s simple, integrated POS software, we just open the sales order screen and pull up the customer by name or account number to view previous orders, credit issues, scheduled deliveries, total purchases to date, outstanding invoices and other information. This helps us ensure the most positive experience for the customer while maximizing the potential value of each transaction.”

Thad Shuler, Operations Manager

Focused on Service: Andersen Windows 2014 National Dealer of the Year

At Andersen's 2014 Window and Door Dealer Conference held earlier this year, Southern Lumber was awarded the company's National Dealer of the Year for overall installation scheduling and customer service. The award also recognizes independent dealers with the highest year-over-year sales. Southern was the winner of several of the 15 awards presented.

Thad Shuler, Operations Manager for Southern Lumber & Millwork said, "We're not the kind of company to go around beating our chest but we are thrilled with this recognition among our peers and believe strongly that the accomplishment speaks to our commitment to being the best supplier to professional contractors and homeowners across the greater Charleston and coastal region that we service."

"Every successful job begins with the first phone call and every communication thereafter is about making sure that we understand exactly what the customer is looking for," Shuler said. "With our diverse lines, our very knowledgeable and experienced sales team educates clients about different materials, helps them choose products and offer design assistance."

"Our sales team is extremely knowledgeable regarding engineered wood, framing, exterior trim and sidings, interior products, or any other custom needs and spends a lot of quality time at its customers' job-site to make sure that the project stays on schedule," Shuler added.

Single Point of Entry from Andersen's Online Quoting Tool

"We sell a lot of Andersen Eagle® and Silver Line® product lines. When a customer comes in, our counter team enters the specifications directly into Andersen's online quote software and then imports the data directly into Ponderosa. We can quickly convert the quote to a sales order which eliminates a lot of confusion and makes sure that when the product arrives everything matches up. This single point of entry really speeds things up," Shuler added.

"Prior to signing on with Ponderosa we were making do with an application that was not nearly as robust as it needed to be. We looked around, spoke with a lot of people within our trade group, the Building Materials Suppliers Association and, after boiling our decision down to two finalists, selected Ponderosa. They came in and made sure they understood every nuance of our business from the showroom to the millwork shop. I think because of this initial thoroughness, we've enjoyed being able to work with them on targeted modifications that have helped us improve our service levels," Shuler said.

Southern Lumber handles approximately 100 walk-ins per day to its Charleston showroom.

Shuler said, "Our goal is for a 10 to 15 minute turnaround from the time the customer drives through the front gate until their vehicle is loaded and ready to go." When a customer enters the showroom, Ponderosa's Point of Sale software lets Southern Lumber instantly pull up their prior transactions, total purchases to date, credit issues and other information to help them identify up-sell opportunities and provide the absolute best service during each visit. "It's not just about giving our customers the flexibility to pay with cash, checks and all major credit cards. It's about making the entire experience as quick and easy as possible," Shuler added.



Sophisticated Production Scheduler Drives Manufacturing Efficiency

"Ponderosa's Production Scheduler is huge for us! We can schedule jobs based on available resources and other commitments, allocate raw materials as needed, and then track the progress as it moves through production," Shuler said. Southern Lumber simply enters a range of scheduled ship dates for the sales orders, and then determine which orders will need a work order or production jobs created. The software saves time by letting the company create as many production orders as needed on a single screen instead of making us create individual production orders one at a time.

All the information about the sales order, the items and the customer as well as the status of the orders (i.e., is the order on hold, is production OK to proceed, etc.) is readily available from this one screen.

The system also reduces the amount of paper flowing through the business which, in turn, saves money. "We used to do a lot of paper shuffling between departments," Shuler said. "With Ponderosa we simply print the required documents to a printer located within each department. It's fantastic!"

"In addition, we often purchase raw materials, manufacture it and then send it to a third-party vendor for priming, Shuler added. "We can export information from Ponderosa to an Excel spreadsheet and send that off to the vendor. It's like two companies are working in the system and from the same spreadsheet at the same time. We always know the status of these jobs in terms of what's open and what's ready for pick-up."

Southern Lumber also utilizes Ponderosa's Production Review screen where they can easily see the status of every production order in the system. This screen is color coded as to easily identify the status of the production orders. Users can also filter the data to show only orders in various types of production (i.e., shop order, planer shed, etc.).

"From the time we create a production order, all the way through its completion, the order is easily tracked for complete transparency," Shuler said.

Top-Notch Inventory Control Methodology

"Ponderosa's inventory control methodology is excellent," Shuler added. "Since transitioning to the software we've been able to reduce the discrepancy in our physical inventory counts. In fact, the discrepancy of our last count was .005%! Ponderosa has been instrumental in making sure we always have the right stock at the right time. We've can track inventory in production, at a third-party site or in storage, helping us virtually eliminate stock outages, back orders and costly re-deliveries due to errors," Shuler added.

Streamlined Delivery and Dispatch Operations Maximize Service

Ponderosa has helped many businesses struggling with delivery inefficiencies and lost profits. "The software's delivery and dispatch software gives us a real-time view of delivery commitments and resources, Shuler said. "From a single screen we're able to create the load and picking detail, schedule the deliveries and create a batch invoice for each truck."

Ponderosa's Delivery and Dispatch tools are designed to help dispatchers manage the staff involved in the order build process and maximize the profitability of every delivery. The software displays the total value of product on the truck as well as the associated fuel costs, driver overhead and other expenses. This helps save money while enabling salespeople to commit to customer delivery times with 100% confidence.

Excellent Working Relationship Fosters Idea Exchange

"We have a fantastic relationship with our consultants at Ponderosa," Shuler said. "Since our go live almost five years ago, we've had the pleasure of working with the same people who continue to service our account like we're their newest customer. It's wonderful being able to bounce ideas off them and get their insights from working with other dealers all these years. We know that anytime we request a change to the software that they'll be there to understand what we're trying to accomplish and recommend the most efficient way to move forward. It may sound cliché, but I am truly happy to call these guys my partner."

Shuler concluded, "I recommend Ponderosa Software to a lot of people and independent dealers. It's one of the best kept secrets in the industry but it's a powerful solution backed by a solid company that's been doing this for a long time."