



The Story – Southern Lumber and Millwork Nowhere to go but up!

The Challenge

Whoever coined the phrase ‘you can’t stop progress’ sure had it right. Just ask Southern Lumber and Millwork’s Joye Shuler. After 75 years serving the Charleston area from their 7-acre King Street location, the ‘progress makers’ at the Department of Transportation decided two of those acres would look much better as an interstate highway, thank you very much.

Southern Lumber and Millwork has been an institution in the South Carolina building supply industry almost since the first day Joye’s father, Herman Albrecht, opened his doors at their King Street location. His bootstrap can-do spirit remains in the DNA at Southern Lumber today, where ‘can’t is a foreign word. Moving from the original location was never an option, so the Shuler family decided to embrace this unexpected challenge from the DOT.

The Solution

“We would consolidate and do the best we could with what we had left,” said Joye. Their next call was to Clint Darnell, vice president at CT Darnell Construction. “It was just a godsend to find someone who actually understood not only what our inventory was – but how to manage it and store it.” According to Joye, “There was no doubt about it, Clint was going to be our guy!”

In addition to the obvious inventory implications that come from reducing your storage space and workable footprint by almost one-third, CT Darnell was faced with essentially reinventing Southern Lumber’s entire facility while maintaining a 100% working operation. “We were changing all four tires while zooming down the highway,” mused CT Darnell’s senior project manager, Brad Bedford.

While acknowledging the unique and significant challenge this project posed, Clint couldn’t hide his enthusiasm. “This is our sweet spot. We don’t just

build steel buildings to store stuff. We dig into the actual business itself, and design a unique solution for it.”

But Clint was quick to point out that none of that mattered unless you had a trusting client partnership.

“Trust is a core value of our company. I want our customers to know that I truly have their best interests at heart.”

Clint Darnell, Owner, CT Darnell Construction

And Southern Lumber reciprocated in spades. Thad Shuler worked closely with Clint to provide every bit of data CT Darnell would need to achieve the best possible results.



While reflecting on the positive relationship with the Southern Lumber family, Travis Darnell, president of CT Darnell, credited them for the ultimate effectiveness of the project. “When a customer works closely with us and has good data, and can supply us with a breakdown of their inventory, we will get

specific down to the bin and the slot.” That mutual level of respect and attention to detail paid off.

The Outcome

- During this time, Southern had the 3 best years in its history, and didn't miss a beat in its service standards.
- The facility operates more efficiently and safely than ever before.
- The site was reduced from 7 to 5 acres.
- The project took 3-1/2 years of planning and construction.
- There were 4 main phases of construction.
- CT Darnell provided 7 new structures: 3 large pre-engineered buildings, 1 cantilever rack drive-thru building, 2 cantilever rack L-sheds, and 1 umbrella shed.
- CT Darnell also provided numerous rack systems including Power Bin automated storage systems, cantilever racks, pallet racks, and A-frame racks.

Clint was thrilled. “When I heard that during this project Southern Lumber had their three largest years of growth sales-wise, I couldn't have been happier!”

The Moral

Adversity not only builds character; sometimes it builds businesses.

Southern Lumber embraced their new reality. They didn't downsize -- they right-sized. And with help from the team at CT Darnell, they are stronger, more efficient, and better positioned to serve even more customers for the next 75 years.



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