

Tony Bour

CEO, Showplace Wood Products

NO STRANGER TO THE CABINET INDUSTRY, Tony Bour has started three highly successful firms during his 49 years in the marketplace: Decora Cabinets and Star-mark Inc., now divisions of Fortune Brands, and Showplace Wood Products.

And he's not done making headlines. Following the addition of a 60,000-square-foot frameless plant at the South Dakota cabinet manufacturer's campus, Bour says one of his goals is "to make our new full-access cabinet line, which we are calling ShowplaceEVO, the 'Full-Access Product Line of Choice' among all our displaying ShowplaceEVO dealers."

The word "our" is used literally by Bour when referencing Showplace. The company transitioned from an investor-owned Sub-S company to an employee-owned Sub-S firm in 2006. "While I'm proud of the companies I've started, I'm most proud of having created an opportunity for every employee to benefit from the success of the company through our ESOP," he says.

"We are still focused on being a profitable company, but we do so with an additional focus on our employee-owners, our dealers, and those who supply our company with goods and services. We don't have to worry about pleasing a private equity group or large conglomerate every quarter



or year-end. We can focus on doing things for long-term reasons and interact with other stakeholders with a strong degree of fairness to everyone involved.

"Being employee-owned creates long-term stability that is good for all who have a stake in our business," he adds. It also goes with his goal of making Showplace the "Employer of Choice" in South Dakota.

Showplace has already established itself as a major national brand, with sales through kitchen and bath dealers. "I believe in focusing on the customer's needs," says Bour, and it's become one of his mantras.

And the best advice he's received? "You can do anything, but you can't do everything,"

Manufacturing is indeed something that Bour can do — and do well. While his first experience in manufacturing was as a high school senior working for a start-up firm, the affinity for handcraftsmanship began much earlier. His paternal grandfather was a cabinetmaker and after a military career in World War II, Bour's dad became an Industrial Arts teacher. "While attending high school, I loved the Industrial Arts classes," he adds.

"I think working with my hands was in my blood."

Bour continues to enjoy working with his hands on projects around the house. For fun he also enjoys a number of activities with his wife and friends, including shooting sporting clays, playing golf and cards.

QUICK GLIMPSE

- **Education:** 3 years at University of Minnesota, accounting major
- **Number of years at the company:** 16 years
- **Number of years in the industry:** 49 years
- **Word that describes you:** Competitive
- **Who have you tried to emulate in business and why?** While my dad and other co-workers

made a big impression on me, I would have to say Jesus Christ. Maybe I'm getting more spiritual and philosophical at this stage of my career, but I think He exemplified the qualities of caring for everyone, regardless of position or stature. When you treat everyone fairly, good things happen.