



Tom Andrew is the vice president of Henry Poor Lumber, a large professional building materials distributor based in Lafayette, Indiana. It's a family run business, which Tom and his brother Jay, president, are taking over from their father, Jim, who joined the company in 1972. Henry Poor's wood packaging division manufactures custom pallets, crates, skids and boxes.

## You Said It



on-time deliveries. For one thing, our pallets are larger than a standard food-grade pallet because of the customers we serve. Our pallets were on average about 6'-wide by 10'-long.

So, I started building pallets on my own in a vacant building. I thought I would build pallets at night to make extra money and maybe start my own side business. After a few orders, I knew I didn't have the capacity, and the venture only lasted for about a month. I decided to call the manager of our wall panel plant. It was during the recession, and the plant had extra capacity so our team at the wall panel plant became pallet builders. They got us into the pallet industry. The pallet division has helped us grow new product lines and pick up new customers.

**PALLET ENTERPRISE:** *What is the most important lesson you've learned about customer service?*

**Andrew:** The customer is always right and treat your customers like you would like to be treated. We have been fortu-

nate to find customers who are partners. They work with us as a team. They expect our yes to mean yes and our no to mean no. We're what I would call the "Starbucks of pallets" – we give our customers what they want when they need custom wood packaging, and we're not scared to experiment.

**PALLET ENTERPRISE:** *How have your customer expectations changed in recent years?*

**Andrew:** The speed that our customers expect answers to questions is faster. Everything moves faster. We used to fax order acknowledgements. Now, we have automated e-mails that send a proof of delivery with colored pictures attached.

**PALLET ENTERPRISE:** *What is the one thing you wish you knew a long time ago that could have helped you or your company?*

**Andrew:** Mistakes happen; it's how you fix them that matters. A mistake is like salt in a wound. The faster you get it out (fix the mistake), the less it hurts. **PE**

**PALLET ENTERPRISE:** *How do you think the pallet industry will change in the next 5-10 years?*

**Andrew:** Automation and the speed at which everything needs to be turned around are the biggest changes that I see in the future. There are going to be a lot more "final mile" close deliveries. Basically, you're going to have to be close to the customers. Everyone wants everything delivered faster and cheaper.

**PALLET ENTERPRISE:** *How and why did Henry Poor first get involved in the pallet industry?*

**Andrew:** Prior to 2011, we were brokering pallets and having issues with

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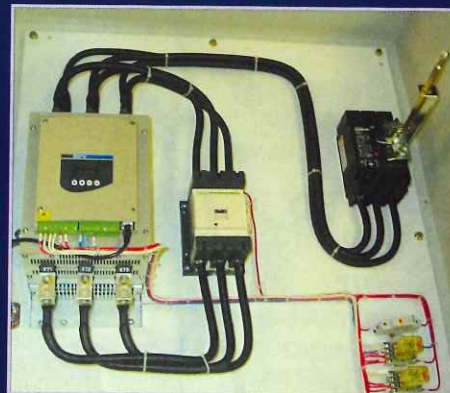
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