

## **Boston Cedar Celebrates a Quarter Century In Business**

By Bethany Sawyer

During the month of March 2010, Boston Cedar is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> year as a premier distributor of quality lumber and building material products. Based in Holbrook, Massachusetts, the company serves a large base of independent retail lumber dealers throughout the Northeastern United States. Boston Cedar has established its name in the industry by focusing on individual customer needs and delivering innovative marketing solutions with top quality products and programs.

Boston Cedar has built on that traditional base by offering customers high-end products such as True Gold, Cowichan Gold, Outback Decking, Pearl Millwork and Abaco Decking. The company has continued to expand on its reputation of offering category leaders through the addition of such innovative products as Latitudes composite decking, Trademark Railing Systems, AZEK Building Products and the Typar Weather Protection System.

### **Trust and Loyalty Are the Cornerstones**

“When we started the company,” Rob Ankner explained, “we wanted to create a company that treated its employees as we ourselves wanted to be treated.”

“I know it’s going to sound corny” said Boston Cedar’s Joyce Hunt. “But it really has been like a family working here over the last 25 years. I started with the company on day one. I was a mom, with an eight-week-old at home, and I worked as the part-time bookkeeper. Today, I’m the Chief Financial Officer. How have we grown so dramatically? ‘We keep our promises,’ has been our motto, and it’s something we take very seriously.”

“It’s about the people. No matter how you look at it. It’s *all* about the people,” said Boston Cedar co-founder Bobby Vasquezi. “Back when George and Rose Cartullo at Brook Contractors Supply - for no other reason than to help us out - allowed us to use storage space...right up to today, our tradition of excellence runs from our customers to our employees and suppliers: *It’s about the people*. There’s just no other way to express it, as clichéd as it sounds.”

“The rules go out the window when a customer calls” said Jim Mulligan, who runs Boston Cedar’s operations. “If someone up north wants something, and our trucks are headed south, we either turn our man around, or we put on another truck to go your way. We keep our promises. We really do.”

### **The Bevel Boys**

Even though Boston Cedar’s commitment to customer service has remained constant over the past quarter century, its product lines have changed with the times.

“When we started out, we were purely a distributor of cedar products - clapboards, boards, decking, and vertical siding,” explained Bobby Vasquezi. “But over the years, the line has changed. Now, there are a lot of alternative products to wood.”

“That’s one of the remarkable things about Boston Cedar,” said Gerard Moynihan, of Moynihan Lumber, one of Boston Cedar’s first customers. “They see product trends we don’t see. They predict where the market will be and – as a customer service to *us*, they alert us to the emerging trend by stocking the next great product offering. It was true when they started to offer PVC products. And composite decking. And they just did it again by getting *way out* in front of the green building movement. They’ll predict the next new thing too. Just you watch.”

That said, the level of success Boston Cedar has experienced over the years through its insight into new products was by no means assured when they launched the company twenty five years ago. Back then, Rob Ankner was serving as branch manager for MacMillan Bloedel, where he met Bobby Vasquez and Tony Morgan, the other two co-founders.

“Robbie was the branch manager. Bobby was the warehouse manager, and I was the sales guy,” explained Tony Morgan. “We were like a NFL ‘special team.’ We each had our special skill, something we were really good at.

The news of Boston Cedar’s launch was dramatic. “I remember when they first said they were going out on their own,” said Tony Shepley, of Shepley Wood Products. “The news leaked out at the NRLA convention, and the word spread like wildfire.”

“It’s funny,” Tony Shepley added, “people say that Boston Cedar is ‘old fashioned.’ But I’ll tell you something, it’s *nice* old fashioned. The kind of old fashioned you wish every company practiced, because BC runs a people-focused business. Trust and loyalty are the cornerstones of everything they do. So, in no small way, that excitement of 25 years ago is still there today. We’ve certainly been a happy customer for 25 years.”

## **Out In Front**

Throughout its 25 year history, Boston Cedar has always been committed to excellence in bringing products to market. “Boston Cedar has clearly established themselves as one of the premier distributors in our industry.” said Eric Jungbluth, President and CEO of CPG International, the parent company of AZEK Building Products. “Our partner since 2003, Boston Cedar has exemplified what we expect from a distributor and they have added real and significant value to the AZEK Brand.”

As a premier source of coastal western red cedar for North America

and beyond, Terminal Forest Products was one of the first suppliers to sign-on with Boston Cedar. “We have been doing business with Boston Cedar for the better part of 25 years,” recalls Brad Ivens, the General Manager for Sales and Marketing at Terminal. “And even as their lines have changed and grown beyond cedar, they remain our biggest customer.”

“After we started with Boston Cedar, it wasn’t long before our relationship developed into a ‘marriage’. Over the years, Boston Cedar and Terminal have jointly created new product lines, and these lines have differentiated us from our competition on an international scale. Boston Cedar has made Terminal a better overall company,” Ivens explained.

As Boston Cedar’s reputation has expanded, so have its product offerings. Bill Currie, Chairman of the Board at Universal Forest Products, remembers when Boston Cedar first inquired about a composite decking product, years ago. “We flew Rob, Tony, Bobby, and Joe Cusack out to look over the plant,” Bill recalled, “and I tell you, to a person, we were just so impressed by their vision for how to take our products to market. Just first-class. You really would have to call our relationship a *collaboration*, and it has been that from day one. They have helped us in every aspect of our operation, from choosing product colors and packaging, right down to what lengths we should sell. They brought to that effort the same sophistication and marketing prowess – including bringing in the NHL Hall of Famer Bobby Orr as a pitchman!”

“When we saw someone *that* serious, *that* committed, we gave them an exclusive on the composite decking line in their regions” said Bill Currie. “That’s not something we do often, or that we offer lightly. But our faith in Boston Cedar has paid off; they have really bolstered the product to a level of prominence that’s exemplary in the industry.”

Boston Cedar is known for putting the same level of commitment into

the marketing and distribution of every line they carry. “When Fiberweb looked to add strategic distribution partners to our network, Boston Cedar stood above the rest due to their deep understanding of products, the importance of customer relationships and service and their unwavering commitment to deliver value to their customers everyday.” Said Bob Dahl, Vice President of Fiberweb. “Boston Cedar has delivered the brand promise for Typar since our first day together and we wish them the best in their next 25 years!”

### **Building the Future**

Today, Boston Cedar continues to search for new products that will provide their retail partner yards a unique and competitive edge. “We will continue to develop training and marketing programs that will meet or exceed our customers needs. Just as the original partners saw the need for a distributor who would keep their promises on price and delivery and set a very high standard to compete with.” explained Joe Cusack, Vice President of Sales. “The present management team understands the complexities that the independent LBM dealer of today faces and is determined to exceed the precedent established by the ‘Founding Father's’ of Boston Cedar.”

In 2009 alone, Boston Cedar’s website (another feature of their marketing that is at the forefront of the industry) won a national award in *ProSales* magazine. “After the Company became FSC Certified and a Certified Green Dealer in July of 2008, Boston Cedar launched *The Green Road Show*” said Paul Colliton, Boston Cedar’s Sales Manager. “At no cost to the participating yards, we had a green expert present the latest about the green building movement. It’s these types of dealer service programs that help keep both our customers and Boston Cedar out in front of the competition.” (The Green Road Show was written about in *LBM*

*Journal*, continuing a string of national-scale press coverage.)

Yes indeed, "The Bevel Boys" have certainly come a long way since 1985.