



SSR's Vision and Growth Leads the Industry

BY MARY SAVAGE

Kevin Halliday is much more than another success story or a shrewd businessman. To say he is an entrepreneur extraordinaire is a good start and like most men of his calibre, his story poses a bit of a dichotomy. He has never worked on the tools, yet has built Spindle, Stairs and Railings (SSR), one of the largest stair and railing manufacturing companies in North America. He has no formal training in business administration, yet his company has won dozens of business awards: Profit's 100 fastest growing companies, RBC Small Business of the Year Award and the Alberta Chamber of Commerce Marketing Award of Distinction just to name a few. It comes as no surprise that Halliday truly is a titan of industry: his ideas are revolutionary and unequivocally, they pave the way for future business models. You won't find an ounce of complacency at SSR; in fact, change is ever present and is one of the secrets to their success. Another key to their success: hire the right people. Halliday has always been the idea guy and a larger-than-life thinker and he knew, one day, their company would revolutionize the construction industry. And that day has arrived.

When Halliday and his wife, Kim, started the company in 1999, they had a half-ton pickup truck and a clearly defined

vision. Although Halliday's family had a stair company in Edmonton, he opted to go into sales for a short time before striking out on his own. Having never installed a railing before, he focused solely on new home construction and started to grow the business, one builder at a time. "From the beginning, I didn't want a business partner. I had a vision and I saw where the market was going," says Halliday.

Today SSR has changed the way the construction process works by offering a supply and install service for more than stairs and railings. They offer this service for mouldings, baseboards, doors, cabinets, flooring and painting. "We offer fewer touch points to the builders and home owners because we look after every aspect of the business - from lumber selection and finishings to installation," asserts Halliday. From the company lumber mill in eastern Ontario to the customer's front door, SSR controls every step of the process and everything is managed in-house to guarantee outstanding quality and service.

SSR has streamlined "the process" and consequently, they have revolutionized the customization of packages for the homeowner and contractors. "We walk the homeowner through the entire process - from the door and trim pack-

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ages to the type of finishings and the installation. We look after every step, so there is no passing the buck from one trade to the next if a problem arises. We want zero deficiencies," remarks Halliday. SSR's website offers an interactive Build-a-Stair application – a first of its kind in the industry. Likewise, SSR has recently partnered with several of the big-box stores to supply and install custom packages for cabinets, mill work and flooring.

Halliday is passionate about every aspect of the business and he takes great pride in turning the status quo upside-down and finding the 'wow' factor. "It kills our competitors because they don't like change, no one likes change, but we are always changing and adapting," he says. "Since we make the products in our manufacturing plant, we are always trying new things and our process allows us to standardize a custom order."

As part of the bigger picture, Halliday believes you control the market when you control the labour; hence SSR has always had an in-house school to train their installers. "We are very specialized with the railings and we've had to train our own people to make sure the installation was done right. Now, we are able to build on that labour pool, and pick and choose our installers for mouldings, baseboard, cabinets and related products," says Halliday. "We have the resources to grow our labour pool and this was part of the original vision." They only hire the best and the brightest and then

train them for the future while keeping an eye on the market. "The market is going to tell us where it's going."

During the economic slowdown, SSR used that time to develop new product lines and perfect operating systems. Today, the company is leaner, more efficient and poised for expansion. "Now we are going national. We already have a dealership in Saskatoon along with the labour pool ready to go. We will keep the manufacturing plant in Calgary with a possible second plant in Edmonton, but they would produce a different product."

The Hallidays are big supporters of community events and give back to various communities in both Alberta and Saskatchewan. In Calgary, SSR is a sponsor of one of the hockey arenas at The Trico Wellness Centre (formerly the Family Leisure Centre). SSR has set up the arenacam.ca so friends and family, from across the country, can watch the kids play hockey at the Calgary arena.

As they celebrate their 11th year in business, for Halliday success is a one-way avenue where you never give up and you never give yourself a way out – other than to succeed. "If you believe in something, you will succeed and the money will follow," he replies. "We are forward thinkers!"



The next time you're thinking about renovating your home or looking for a bit of inspiration, contact SSR: call 403-294-0555, click www.greatstairs.com or visit the Calgary showroom at 6423 30 Street SE.