

# BANKER & TRADESMAN

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**PROFILE IN COMMERCE:** *Ted Goodnow*

## Woodmeister Master Builders Founder Knows Homes, Both Inside and Out

By **Aglaia Pikounis**

THESE DAYS, TED GOODNOW CAN LAUGH ABOUT his unsuccessful attempt to land one of his first jobs at the finest cabinet-making company in the Worcester region.

The company owner took one look at Goodnow, who was only 19 at the time, and told him he didn't hire anyone under 40. Fortunately, the minor setback didn't dampen Goodnow's passion for woodworking. In fact, it was just the extra push he needed to launch his own business.

"I just decided ... if I can't work at the best place around, I'll just do my own thing," said Goodnow, who started Woodmeister 26 years ago.

Today, Woodmeister is a 150-employee company that specializes in upscale custom homebuilding, renovation and cabinetry and interior work. The work of Goodnow's award-winning company, which is expecting \$25 million in sales this year, has been featured on the popular television series "This Old House" and is admired by the owners of brownstones in tony Beacon Hill, luxurious mansions in Newport, R.I., and multimillion-dollar vacation homes on the island of Nantucket.

Throughout the years, Goodnow has adapted and expanded his company to meet clients' needs. With operations in Worcester, Nantucket and Portsmouth, R.I., a substantial chunk of Woodmeister's business remains custom cabinetry, millwork and other home interior projects. But each year the company also builds about six new homes and renovates and puts additions on 30 to 40 residences.

Woodmeister also introduced so-called lifestyle management services about six years ago. The service offers clients custom packages to help them with everything from routine inspections and home maintenance –



B&T staff photo

**Ted Goodnow is founder and chief executive officer of Woodmeister Master Builders, a Worcester-based luxury homebuilding and renovation company that specializes in custom cabinetry and interiors.**

such as changing filters on heating and cooling systems – to more continuous caretaker services.

### Integrated Approach

At the core of these services is Woodmeister's integrated approach to building and renovating homes – an approach that Goodnow says truly differentiates his company from many of its competitors.

Unlike the traditional method of building a home where architects design a home and then a builder with the winning bid begins construction and upon completion an interior designer is brought in, Woodmeister

teams with homeowners, architects and interior designers early on in the process to create a living space that is fully integrated. Attention is paid to every detail before a project begins.

Martin Deale, vice president of sales and marketing for the company, said that collaborative concept is traditionally missing in the homebuilding industry. In many cases, architects, builders and designers work separately, he explained.

"What Woodmeister is doing so successfully is changing the thinking process and recognizing that there are three experts in-

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volved in the building process,” said Deale, referring to the architect, builder and designer. “By putting the team together right upfront early on, you get what you call ‘the power of three.’”

It’s an approach that helps to eliminate surprises during and after construction, according to Woodmeister’s leaders, and a philosophy that Goodnow says he embraced early on in his career.

“It’s pretty simple if you’re committed to an integrated approach because you’re trying to be comprehensive about how you’re approaching a room,” he said. “If you build a wall and you build a cabinet for that wall and the lights don’t line up where they’re supposed to or the speakers don’t fit in the cabinets, or something isn’t right, you pretty quickly realize that you can either take a proactive approach to being responsible for integrating those pieces or just sort of accept the fact that they’re never going to go all together ... I was very much about getting it right as an integrated approach rather than saying, ‘Boy, isn’t that a beautiful piece that we built, even though it doesn’t sort of work with all the things around it.’”

In an interview last week, Goodnow emphasized how he has built a company that tries to take the inefficiencies out of construction, ultimately saving clients money and time. His company also strives to make the homebuilding and renovation process as pleasurable as possible.

But for many homeowners, the building and renovation process can be quite frustrating. Goodnow was recently reminded of that when a client who was using another builder to renovate her house complained about the entire process.

Goodnow, who says Woodmeister was only providing cabinets for the home, was able to tell the client that the renovation process doesn’t have to be terrible.

“We focus on making it fun for the customer and making it enjoyable. And I really believe that,” said Goodnow, who lives in Princeton with his wife Kim, two teenage daughters and 7-year-old son.

More than two decades ago when he was looking to work for the premier cabinet-maker in town and was turned down, it may have been tough for Goodnow – who marvels at the fact that he’s been able to turn his

hobby into a living – to believe that he’d be running such a successful operation.

But just a few months ago, the owner of that established, well-regarded company – who refused to hire Goodnow when he was just a teenager – called and asked Goodnow if he was interested in buying the business. Goodnow says there was nothing really left of the business, except for some old equipment. The company was eventually auctioned off.

“I felt bad for him because he was always the guy that I looked up to, but ... for me it was like the risk of being a dinosaur, the risk of not evolving,” Goodnow said.

Woodmeister’s headquarters, currently located on Washington Street in Worcester, will be relocated later this year to a larger facility in Holden.

As for the future, Goodnow said the company plans “to keep doing what we’re doing.”

“We’re going to keep listening carefully to what the customers want,” he said. “We’re going to keep perfecting what it is we do. We’re going to keep being leaders in trying to integrate all these services and take responsibility for them.” ■