



Mike Wright, left, and Darrell Hayley own Cabinets by Hayley, a garage renovation business that's been growing and expanding in the face of the economic downturn.

Photograph by: Dean Bicknell, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

Small Business

Cabinets By Hayley - Started in 1976 as Hayley and stand-alone tool Industrial Electronics; boxes; - Retail offshoot Cabinets - Has own powder coating By Hayley in 2006; facility; - Manufactures modular - Offers custom coatings metal garage cabinets for garage floors.

The typical garage is often an untidy place crammed full of bikes, a wheelbarrow, lawn mower, assorted yard implements, sports equipment, empties and, if space permits, maybe even room for a car.

Darrell Hayley would like to change that mindset by having people take another look at what's arguably one of the biggest open spaces in their homes.

Instead of allowing the garage to become a storage area or, worse, a junk receptacle, he argued the garage should function as an orderly and inviting space --one people won't dread setting foot in.

"If you have it done right, it's a place you want to be and not a place you want to get away from," said Hayley, who owns Cabinets By Hayley.

Most tricked-out garages are typically branded man-caves, but Hayley noted men aren't always the instigator when it comes to fixing up the space.

"Quite often when we're talking to people, it's actually the lady that pushes it because she wants the garage cleaned up. Sometimes the guys are the hesitant ones. It depends on what they're into," he said.

The garage cabinet business is a new retail offering spun out of Hayley Industrial Electronics, which has been manufacturing uninterruptible power supply, or UPS--essentially backup power for computer systems--since 1980.

It might seem like a bit of a leap in logic, but the garage cabinets are an offshoot of the metal enclosures the company built to house the UPS systems, primarily used in the oil-patch and in manufacturing.

The other key driver is that Hayley is a hardcore car racing enthusiast, as is his wife, kids and a good number of his employees.

Hayley said the garage-related idea started with a desire to build rolling pit wagons for his own race car trailer and his own use, and he soon found himself developing drawers and cabinets.

It wasn't long afterwards that he realized the garage market was out there.

"All of a sudden, this product went from a simple idea to expanding into currently what we're doing, which is producing garage cabinets," he said.

The garage cabinet business initially started as a manufacturer only, distributing to various garage shops across the country, but has since decided to open a retail garage store in Calgary.

Cabinets By Hayley offers the metal garage cabinets as well as custom garage floor coatings.

The custom floor coating is achieved through a four-step process, and produces an end result that looks good and is easy to clean.

While the floor product is an option for just about any garage owner, the cabinets tend to be the obvious choice for regular guys with tools right through to those with a fleet of high-end sports cars who want their garage space to act as a backdrop for the shiny metal eye candy.

The garage cabinets are available in standard sizes and different models, and the company has the capability to do custom sizes, if required.

Another advantage, said Hayley, is that the company manufactures locally in its own shop, which means custom orders are done that much easier.

In general, the garage cabinets are produced out of a heavy duty gauge material, sport a similarly strong powder coat, and are available in a range of standard colours.

In addition to the retail storefront, Cabinets By Hayley's reach extends to a couple of small home builders, who've included the product in their garage package and plan to spec the product as standard in their homes.

The company is also working with a local RV dealer, to build lightweight aluminum versions of their metal cabinets for trailers.

Hayley Industrial Electronics was started in 1976 by family patriarch, Noel Hayley, with a focus on manufacturing.

The company first dealt in farm equipment, and that soon developed into electronic manufacturing.

Around 1980, they began manufacturing the UPS systems, which they've been manufacturing since.

"I remember back when we first started, we had a single table and a drill press. That's what he started with," Darrell said of his dad's venture.

Darrell grew up in the business, and spent many years helping his father before joining the company full-time in 1986.

He spent the first five years working in the back before moving into the front offices as production manager.

In 2000, the business bought the 20,000-square-foot building it's now in in the city's southeast.

Buying a building made sense: all of the equipment they manufacture goes into metal enclosures and the extra space allowed them to buy all their own sheet metal equipment to do the manufacturing themselves.

A few years later, they purchased a powder coating facility at a separate location, to do their own painting in.

Today, the main business does some custom manufacturing for companies in the oil and gas industry.

The UPS market is the biggest piece of the pie, however, contributing 75 per cent of business.

About 15 per cent of business is outside manufacturing, and 10 per cent on the garage cabinets.

Annual sales are \$10 million.

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