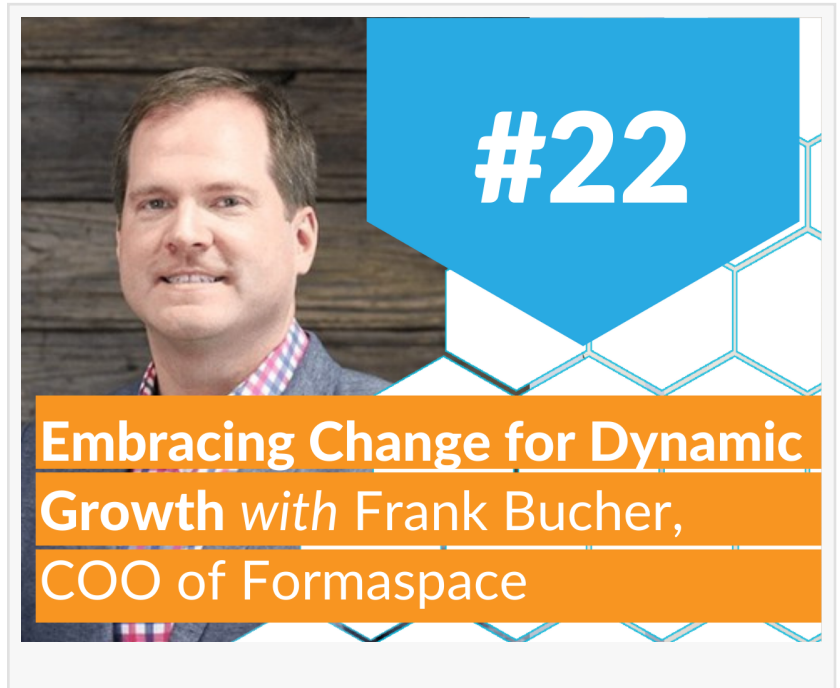


Embracing Change for Dynamic Growth with Frank Bucher, COO of Formaspace

Frank Bucher joins Sid Meadows in The Trend Report podcast to discuss how Formaspace has transitioned their business to thrive despite the turn in the economy.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- There isn't an industry on the planet that hasn't been hit by the pandemic, but there are many businesses that are now thriving despite the turn in the economy. Why have some businesses flourished while others have floundered?



Frank Bucher, COO at Formaspace, joins Sid Meadows in his The Trend Report podcast to discuss how Formaspace has transitioned their business to have better reaction times and amazing customer service, allowing them to thrive in this time.

“

We're really good at translating the clients' needs into a custom solution that will fit their business. ”

Frank Bucher

What sets Formaspace apart from other companies just like them?

Sid: Hey there. Welcome to today's Trend Report Podcast. I'm glad you are joining us for what is going to be another great conversation with an industry leader, and I'm happy to welcome Frank Bucher with Formaspace to the podcast today. Hey Frank, how are you?

Frank Bucher: Great, thanks for having me Sid, how are you today?

Sid: Great. Thank you sir. First, I think we'll start this conversation off with a big congratulations to you and your big promotion to the chief operating officer at Formaspace. That's great.

Frank Bucher: Appreciate it.

Sid: Frank, tell us a little bit about your journey, who you are, and what is Formaspace, what do you guys do?

Frank Bucher: I've been in the business since '95, which feels like a lifetime ago. I started out in a dealer to sales capacity and then migrated my way over to the manufacturing sides, a balance of my career seven or eight years with Teknion, and then over to H&I, in various roles. Then, you and I had the pleasure of working together at AIS for a small time. After that, I was over at Baker manufacturing for about three years. My last stop before Formaspace was with BKM in Texas, helping out to run the Steelcase sales and marketing piece of the dealership. And then, I've been with Formaspace for a little over three years. Started out just in sales and marketing, but then in July, I've taken over a more expanded role where I'm running a lot of the business. So it's been great, we have two different sides of our business. One is lab and industrial furniture, and that's sort of our historic business, our heritage business, if you will. And the other side, which is very emerging, is custom office furniture.

Sid: So you've had a great journey learning a lot about our industry, and in a variety of different roles. And then you landed in a lab manufacturer, industrial products. And if I'm not mistaken, weren't you kind of the catalyst for them to get into the custom office?

Frank Bucher: Yeah, it's a good question. Jeff Turk, the owner, had really kind of done business with a bunch of dealers, especially out West. One Workplace was a real big dealer for us. And they were really the ones who were telling us that [the industrial benches and lab furniture](#) that we're selling is really popular on [the office side of the fence](#). A lot of architects, designers love that sort of industrial look and they have coined it industrial steam punk to begin with because it did have that really cool, fun look to it. So we had dipped our toe into it. I was brought on board right before NeoCon three years ago. My charge was to get independent reps on board and develop and build out that strategy. So they had the momentum, and I was the guy to get on, right as the wave was starting to crest, and really help us lean into and leverage what we were doing on that side of the fence.

Sid: Great. So obviously, as we all know right now, things are a little bit crazy in the world. Some people are emerging out of the COVID shut down, some are not. Tell me what it's been like for you guys during the last six months.

Frank Bucher: It's been a lot of uncertainty for everyone. I know we've been very fortunate, very blessed with both sides of our business being so radically different. On the lab and industrial side, we've seen that labs are shutting down. In fact, they're going the opposite way. A lot of life scientists have to continue working. We've seen a lot of people on the educational side of the fence that have taken this opportunity to redo labs that they've been wanting to do for years. And they just couldn't, because students were continually coming, cycling through. Then on the

office side we've been pretty successful because people know that we're a custom manufacturer and there's a lot of uncertainty right now and they don't know what they want and they know that we're good at that. We're really good at translating the clients' needs into a custom solution that will fit their business. Through August 30, first of this year, we've booked more business than we did all of 2019. So we're up double digits year over year. And we're very fortunate to have great dealer partners, great end customers, really good raving fans in the architectural and design community as well.

Sid: You guys should be congratulated for that. Your sales are up. And even before the year's over, you've exceeded last year sales, which is fantastic because there's not a lot of people that can say that and we all read their reports. We all see the news that comes out about the decline in sales. Frank, what do you really attribute that growth to? What was it that really got you there?

Frank Bucher: That's a great question because I get that a fair amount and I would tell you, we're very fortunate. Number one, because the way our business model is set up, like I said before, we have two different sides of our business. So that certainly helps, when one side might be down a little bit, the other side certainly is keeping a pace, but we're fortunate, both sides were surging. We are really a company that's geared to talk to customers about solutions. We're not really a standard product company. We have some standard products, but really people look at our standard products and say, okay, I get it. I get what you can do. Now, what I really want is this, I really want you to make this. I want you to make it a little bit bigger. I want you to brand this. So we're very fortunate that people in this environment now have really come to us and really embraced the materials that we use.

We recognized early on that sneeze guards were going to be a really high demand item. And so we've been working with acrylic, we've been working with PETG, we've been working with HDPE, a lot of different types of materials. I think that gave a lot of our customers a lot of comfort.

The other effect that we didn't realize was that now this opened up the door to people who had never had an experience with Formaspace. They didn't know what we could do, or the customization ability of our products, or how we would really embrace what they wanted and give them something that's a deliverable product in a much sooner timeframe than most of our competition. So now what we're starting to see is our dealer partners are coming to us for other things that we hadn't even considered because they've had a good buying experience and we've really been able to custom tailor things.

The other piece of it too, is the way our business is structured. We have an engineering and industrial design team in house, so we don't have to outsource those functions. I can really line our business model and line our functions up so that when a customer says, hey, this is what I want - we can take that, translate it and get them some drawings fairly quickly so that they can sign off and have a reasonable facsimile of what it would look like. And then get an order in a quicker fashion than you typically would with custom products.

Sid: So there's several things you said that I think are really interesting. First off, you said diversity is key. And that really helped you grow – being diversified, working in multiple vertical markets.

Frank Bucher: Absolutely. One great example of that was General Motors. General Motors called us and they came to us when they had a partnership with Ventech to start building ventilators and their Kokomo, Indiana facility that we're going to repurpose. They needed lab benches and they needed them quickly. So we were able to take our entire production schedule and we worked pretty diligently to make sure that we could make room for General Motors. We started shipping about a day after they called us. I think it was basically a day or two business days to get everything set. We started shipping full truckloads for close to 30 days to fulfill this order for them. Being diversified and working on that side of the fence allowed us to be essential and keep our factory open and still to serve as a lot of customers on the office side. So having that diversity and that balance was huge for us on a lot of levels.

Sid: That's great. And Frank, did I hear you say correctly, you started shipping products to General Motors within days of them calling you?

Frank Bucher: Yeah, they reached us on a Sunday night, and I have to give kudos.

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