

2017



## A Case Study on the GBM

# GBM<sup>tm</sup> Global Buyers Mission Whistler, British Columbia

The Global Buyers Mission is BC Wood's premier event to expand sales and diversify markets for BC and Canada's value-added wood products industry.



**The purpose of this case study** is to demonstrate how the Global Buyers Mission (GBM) and its associated events, help individual companies expand sales and diversify their markets through export growth. As part of BC Wood's performance measures, it also provides feedback for event improvement. The case study will be updated annually with new entrants, and track company progress over time, to broaden the lessons learned.

The GBM assists small manufacturers who are ready to expand to new markets but need help navigating the territory, as well as small and mid-sized companies that have achieved some export success—most often in the US—and are interested in expanding to offshore markets.

For most wood product companies, achieving export growth involves three phases:

1. Novice: Building capacity and export readiness
2. Apprentice: Export testing and initial success
3. Experienced: Market expansion and diversification

Although the time required to traverse the three phases varies significantly by company—due to size, experience, product value, market knowledge, etc.—it is rarely less than a few years and often takes five or more years.

The following four companies were selected to demonstrate—through their respective experiences—how the GBM is helping them become export ready and grow their sales.

## Creative Woods Unlimited

### Teeswater, Ontario



**Creative Woods Unlimited**, a producer of live edge hardwood slabs and other character-wood products, is owned and operated by Dennis McGlynn, a 30-year veteran of Ontario’s sawmilling and wood flooring industry. After working most of his career for his brother at Bernie McGlynn Lumber, an opportunity arose in 2017 for Dennis to venture out and establish his own wood credentials. And he jumped at the chance.

Products	Phase	GBM Participant
Live edge hardwood slabs and character grade logs	1-2	First Timer

### The Export Challenge

Notwithstanding the many relationships McGlynn developed over three decades in the industry, and his knowledge of the US market; Creative Woods is a start-up company with limited capital. Further, given the considerable effort and money required to identify and pursue US and offshore markets, he simply hasn’t had the capacity. As such, the company’s sales focus to date has been southeastern Ontario.

### The GBM Solution

In partnership with the Bluewater Wood Alliance and with support from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, McGlynn was talked into “giving the GBM a try”.

A trade show trouper with over 500 shows under his belt, McGlynn said of his experience, “the GBM is the best trade show I’ve ever attended”. The GBM difference “lies in the fact that the participating buyers are pre-qualified and thus of exceptionally high quality”.

Four months hence, his ten good leads have already resulted in one sale and several others could follow. McGlynn was particularly encouraged by the interest shown by the Japanese delegates in his live edge product line.





# Horizon Coatings

## Elmira, Ontario



First opened for business in 2002, **Horizon Coatings** is a custom finishing company specializing in the pre-finishing of wood products. In addition to this work, says owner Chris Martin, “the company produces pine flooring and tongue and groove pine for ceilings and walls”. More recently, the company added rustic accent walls to its product line, under the name Provincial Plank™.

Products	Phase	GBM Participant
Provincial Plank™ accent walls	1-2	First Timer

### The Export Challenge

To truly be appreciated, Martin believes his products need to be seen and sensed. But after ‘taste-testing’ a few export-oriented trade shows, he conceded he was ill-equipped. Top of his shortfall list was a lack of

knowledge on how to navigate non-English-speaking markets, particularly those with unique cultures. Product challenges presented themselves as well—even in the US, given the long-lengths of his rustic pine offerings. This in part was the driver for Martin’s newest product line Provincial Plank™, which can be shipped on a pallet (and was featured at the GBM).

### The GBM Solution

“The low key, speeches-light, business format, was ideal for trade show exhibitors” says Martin. And combined with the top-notch venue and hospitality for our international guests, he added, “I was a proud Canadian”.

The follow-up service provided by BC Wood/Canada Wood representative Jim Ivanoff was also impressive, according to Martin. “In addition to helping out with translation at the show itself, Jim followed-up post event and offered more of the same, should I attend the Tokyo Home Show two months hence”. The timing was too tight but—given his recent sale to a Japanese delegate and handful of live leads—he regrets missing it. Not so regarding next year’s GBM though. He’s already confirmed.



# San Group Inc.

## Langley, BC



**San Group Inc.** is unique when it comes to value-added wood products producers. That’s because it has evolved from a small lumber remanufacturing facility into a mid-sized, multi-level forest products corporation. Most notable is its recent purchase of Coulson Manufacturing in Port Alberni (which occurred just a few months prior to the GBM) and the growth and diversification plans that has unleashed. This includes a significant and growing relationship with local First Nations, many of whom are employed by the company or supply timber to the mills. In addition to logs and dimension lumber, the San Group product line includes Western Red Cedar boards, shingle panels and engineered siding/panels.



## The Export Challenge

Although the San Group is not new to export sales, its recent purchase and product line expansion is part of a broader plan that elevates the importance of value-added export sales. This evolution includes the hiring and training of marketing staff and makes participation in key market development shows—such as the GBM—a priority.

Products	Phase	GBM Participant
Cedar boards, panelling, shingles and flooring	2-3	Experienced (with new capacity)

## The GBM Solution

For Business Development VP Bob Bortolin, “the preponderance of quality buyers at the GBM is a major selling



point”. In addition to the seniority of the individuals present, “the markets represented line up well with our priorities”.

Further, the diversity of markets represented is important, as evidenced by the interest shown by the Mexican delegates. “Mexico is not a market we would otherwise have targeted”, said Bortolin.

Finally, the extended mission program—for which the San Group provided mill tours prior the event—proved worthy. “So much so”, said Bortolin, “that this more intimate [lead-generating] activity was repeated post-event with several of the Mexican buyers”.

## Barker Manufacturing Inc. Victoria, BC



Inspired by the appeal of chisel marks on the underside of an old wooden table, Jim Barker asked “why not texture wood with CNC precision?” Textured surfaces “tempt us to touch and allow our senses to interpret the organic compositions of the materials”, says Barker. And so the story goes. From subtle knife lines to large adze-styled gouging, **Barker**

**Manufacturing** can produce unlimited combinations of textures and finishes for boundless applications and uses.

Products	Phase	GBM Participant
Textured millwork, burnt and weathered wood	3	Experienced (with an evolving product line)



## The Export Challenge

The custom nature of textured millwork and its niche-market applications creates challenges when the product is site-unseen. As such, product exposure and awareness is key, particularly for a small company that needs to find buyers who do not necessarily conform to standard design ideas and practices.

## The GBM Solution

An experienced GBM participant, Jim Barker values the GBM most for its past assistance but says he continues to benefit despite his export and diversification success. Given his unique product line, Barker says, “sometimes the gestation period for a lead is five to ten years”.

A champion of GBM’s formula in general, Barker adds that the value proposition is somewhat intrinsic to the event itself, “including networking with other value added-added exhibitors, and being present at subsequent BC Wood events in the buyer’s home countries”. In sum, there are some benefits that only come with time, presence and perseverance, and for Barker, the GBM “is at the top of the hit list”.

