

Soul of an entrepreneur

Bongaerts strikes gold with Beaufurn furniture company

The name of furniture company Beaufurn LLC embodies the combination of two words — beautiful and furniture — to service the Triad and clients worldwide.

Created in 1996, the Winston-Salem-based company's mission since its beginnings has been to supply and design high-end hospitality seating. Serving a majority of commercial clients, Beaufurn's quality and designs speaks for itself.

“Determination and perseverance, that's what drives me. To be successful, despite all the odds.”

The company serves such clients as The Cheesecake Factory, Mrs. Fields/TCBY Stores, Verizon Wireless/Cellular Sales, Universal Studios, Walt Disney Co., Steve Wynn Casino, Sea World and McDonald's.

Its founder, Bill Bongaerts, is the definition of a go-getter. With a bachelor's degree in psychology and philosophy, as well as a master's degree in business administration from the University of Toronto, Bongaerts has always been a leader.

Born and raised in The Congo, he also lived in Brussels, Belgium and Toronto before making Winston-Salem his home. According to Bongaerts, the company rose from the ashes as a result of a life-changing catastrophe.

Bongaerts owned an import/export lumber supply business in Toronto and later sold the company to launch a residential furniture establishment. Soon after, a fire from an adjacent business destroyed Bongaerts' furniture company after six years of success.

“I had to feed my family,” he explains. “I never worked for anyone else in my life, so for me the next step was to think of a business that I really wanted to do.”

Bongaerts decided to switch gears and focus on the commercial furniture market after being inspired by bistro chairs at a restaurant in Paris.

“When the fire destroyed my business, I looked back and asked myself, ‘What do I really enjoy?’ I just kept expanding from there,” he says.

Unmatchable services

Deeply involved with his company, Bongaerts continues designing and brainstorming to develop unique designs and ideas.

“My main focus is to continue to think of the direction of this company to make it grow and continue its path of success,” he says.

He says that in order to be competitive, firms must think globally. At the same time, he's still invested in his new home in the U.S.

Beaufurn has added 12,000 square feet to its facility to accommodate demand, and is expanding its upholstery division as well. The company plans to hire between two and three additional employees within the next several months.

Bongaerts, who says he is supportive of the green movement, believes in using more sustainable products and hopes that the trend will further develop over the next five years.

When asked how he remained driven after disaster struck his residential business, Bongaerts says it took five years of hard work to build up the business of Beaufurn, but through determination, perseverance, and a willful personality, he never gave up.

“Determination and perseverance, that's what drives me,” he explains. “To be successful, despite all the odds.”

About the company

Name: Beaufurn LLC

Location: Winston-Salem

Leadership: Bill Bongaerts, president

Year founded: 1996

Number of employees: 16

Services: Provider of high-quality designed furnishing solutions worldwide

Web site: www.beaufurn.com