



Five Questions: Richie Siewers A series of informal Spruce customer interviews

Free Web Events

Back by popular demand, we'll be holding monthly internet-based SpruceWare.NET demonstrations that are open to all Spruce customers. Here are the upcoming events:

Tuesday, 6/17/2008
10:30-Noon

Wednesday, 7/23/2008
4-5:30 pm

Tuesday, 8/12/2008
1-2:30 PM

Sign up by emailing events@sprucecomputer.com and we'll get you the details.

If somebody walked up to German immigrant R.A. Siewers 124 years ago and asked "What's new?" he may have said "they just opened the first roller coaster in the U.S. at Coney Island," or "John Kellogg just patented corn flakes," or "they just placed the first cornerstone of the Statue of Liberty," or "the Washington Monument is finally done." But probably not. More likely, he would have said "I'm opening a new business!"

Today, **Siewers Lumber & Millwork** in Richmond, Virginia, is still going strong. We spoke with Richie Siewers, the family company's Executive Vice President, about what continues to make his business tick.

Could you describe your business?

We are a full service lumberyard and millwork operation. We are not your typical commodity yard but more of a specialty lumberyard; our typical customer is the custom builder and high end remodeler. We have talented, knowledgeable people who service our contractors extremely well, with a wide variety of inventory and a mill that can manufacture or replicate anything in wood. We have developed a reputation for carrying the best quality products in Central Virginia. We inventory all your typical products in a lumberyard in addition to a variety of specialty millwork products. For instance,



we carry over 300 different mouldings in stock, 20 types of hardwoods and we have a mill where we can custom manufacture any door, moulding, shutter or sash.

Who are your major suppliers?

Weyerhaeuser, BlueLinX, Marvin, Lincoln, and Jeld-Wen.

Is the economic downturn making you do things differently?

It is a more competitive environment due to the downturn. We are watching our accounts receivables and collections more closely, keeping moderate inventory levels, and keeping in close contact with our current customers.

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Dot Net but Not Yet?

Painlessly prepare for an eventual transition to SpruceWare.NET

If you are thinking about moving to SpruceWare.NET some day but you're not ready yet, you're still not off the hook in terms of preparation. The best way to be ready when you do decide to change is to get your infrastructure in place over time so when you make your transition, the hardware side of the changeover can be simple and focused. Here are some basic things you can do over time to get in a position to switch to SpruceWare.NET.

When peripherals quit, don't automatically replace them with the same thing. Replace dumb terminals with PCs when they give up the ghost. Verify with Spruce that the barcode scanner you're getting to replace a broken model will work on SpruceWare.NET. Think about laser printing instead of dot matrix printing (this is less attractive if you have SprucePlus and your timeframe for

moving to .NET is soon, since the software cost is in the \$6,000 neighborhood; lasers are normal in SpruceWare.NET at no additional charge).



Think Network. When you replace or add devices, you can probably add them to your network rather than using old serial cables and equipment. Not only will they be faster, but you'll

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Welcome to the Spruce Family Thanks to all our newest partners.

Arizona Stone and Architectural Products LLC

Phoenix, AZ

Builders Service Inc.

Elcho, WI

Coldwater Lumber Co.

Coldwater, OH

Highland Plumbing & Heating Ltd.

Inverness, Scotland

Huntsville Hardware

Huntsville, AL

Jensen Lumber Co.

Draper, UT

Miltonvale Lumber Co.

Miltonvale, KS

Monument Lumber Co.

Freedom, CA

Ocean Springs Lumber & Supply Co.

Ocean Springs, MS

Portsmouth Lumber Corp.

Portsmouth, VA

Westwood Building Materials

Lawndale, CA

Welcome aboard!



No big hurry?

Try email support!



If you have **SprucePlus** or **SpruceWare.NET** support questions that aren't urgent, you might want to consider using email for support. It may be a few days before you get your answer, because we prioritize phone questions above email questions, but it's a great way to get support for those smaller problems and questions that come up. The support texting / email address is:

support@sprucecomputer.com

This software support email address is not for original SpruceWare support.

Please only use it for questions that aren't urgent. We don't want you to be disappointed!

SpruceNews Poll

What are the most important trade shows you attend? Email or text us your answer:

polls@sprucecomputer.com

Crystal Reports Templates Extended SpruceWare.NET Reporting

Custom reporting for SpruceWare.NET takes advantage of Crystal Reports, the industry standard reporting software that we've been automatically including with new SpruceWare.NET systems for almost as long as we've had SpruceWare.NET. What's that mean for you? You can download any template available

on the spruceI.com website at no charge and customize those reports to meet your needs.

Currently the free templates available report on groups and sections, A/P bank reconciliation, untransferred payables, gift card usage and listings, new jobs, tax locations, tax not charged on

taxable locations, refund checks, credit letters, commissions, mailing labels, customers over their credit limits, A/P check register, open item invoice aging, and accounts without sales, and the list is always growing. Log in at www.sprucecomputer.com and choose *Help and Resources* then *Crystal Reports Templates*.



SprucePlus Features you can use

Accounts Payable Invoice Inquiry

The Accounts Payable Invoice Inquiry has many options available for looking up invoices. One of the most useful features is the Lookup option found in the function box on the Inquiry screen. This option brings up a separate screen with various options to find invoices: by vendor, date (bill date, due date, or discount date) and date range. The Status

Type field allows you to select invoices of a specific status. The following are the available selection types: A -All invoices, O - Open invoices, E - Invoice entered (open), H -On Hold, F -Marked as Pay-In-Full (open), R -Marked as Partial Pay (open), P -Marked as Paid and is closed, T - template.

(Note: Depending on status type selected and the number of invoices with that status, there may be a delay while the system searches through the invoices to find matches).

The Lookup screen also allows you to select which fields are to be displayed in the invoice selection list and you can select up to



two sort fields from the available 16 invoice fields. You decide which fields to see and

what to sort on and you can save these fields as defaults by selecting the DTL DFLT option in the function box. Once you process the look up, the system will display the list of invoices matching your settings. You then can select an invoice from the list to view. Also available on the selection list is an option to search for data within

the selection list, including the pay to information name used with the miscellaneous vendor.

The Accounts Payables module also has a *Billing History* file for invoice history inquiry. The file stores purged paid invoices, deleted invoices, purged packing slips, and packing slips removed by selecting "packing slip" in *Invoice Setup/Update*. The file is accessed in the Invoice Inquiry screen by entering the invoice number, or by choosing the HIST PRG or HIST OPN option box options. HIST PRG pulls up purged paid invoices and packing slips. The HIST OPN option pulls up purged open invoices only by invoice number or vendor.

Under the HIST PRG option, you may pull up invoices by invoice

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Five Questions **Richie Siewers**

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How have you gotten where you are at the company?

I've been with the company for 22 years. We are a family business; I worked summers during high school and college primarily in the yard and on deliveries and after graduation I was well prepared to begin in inside sales. Fortunately after

graduation the business was growing and needed help in sales. The last 8 years I've been the Executive Vice President.

You are in the process of transitioning from SprucePlus to SpruceWare.NET. Can you describe it so far?

We have been satisfied with our existing SprucePlus system but the SpruceWare.Net software will enable us to be more efficient and retrieve

more information to better manage our business. I use the computer system most of the day, so it is just going to take time to get familiar with the new system, but we should be ready for our June 1 live date. We just completed the training and have 6 weeks to prepare for our live date. We are looking forward to the transition.

Editor's note: This interview took place in late April; Siewers is now live on SpruceWare.NET. Read more about the company at siewers.com.

“SpruceWare.NET software will enable us to be more efficient.”

SpruceWare.NET Prep

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be preparing for an all-network environment in the process. Don't have a trusted local network specialist? Talk to local business associates—perhaps your lawyer, accountant, or banker—and see if they can recommend their provider as someone good and trustworthy. This will be an important relationship for you going forward!

Don't slack on that file maintenance. Since there's a conversion of data somewhere in your future (and there's a downturn in the market that might be freeing up some of your people's time), expend some effort cleaning up your data. If you've been putting off

cleaning up item SKUs, removing old and inactive customer, vendor, and item records, or reorganizing your groups and sections, now's the hour.

If it's going to be a while, don't try to make your old server limp along. If you have a SprucePlus (unix-based) system and your aging and unsupported server suffers a hardware failure, you may find that you have to get a new one on very short notice in order to keep going. Once that happens, you'll feel obligated to keep it in place for several years to pay for the investment—and events will be making your decisions for you. If you upgrade your server now, your future SpruceWare.NET upgrade

can be according to your schedule.

Make a list of the reports and features that you find most useful about your current system. When it comes time to evaluate SpruceWare.NET as an upgrade, you will be able to see how those are addressed in the new software. The more informed you are, the better your decisions and transition will ultimately be.

Learn about SpruceWare.NET. Attend online demonstrations (see page 1), and ask Spruce's marketing department for a reference list. If you're in the neighborhood of someone using SpruceWare.NET, ask them if it's OK if you stop in. You'll pick up pointers for a better transition in the process.

Did you Know? It's normal in many software companies for your call to be answered by an operator whose sole job is to document your call. In many cases you won't get a call back by a first-line support person (often from overseas) until days later. We hope you enjoy the speedy support you get from Spruce!

“Events will be making your decisions for you.”

Employee Snapshot: **Bob Miller** Each issue, we briefly profile a Spruce employee.

Name: Robert (Bob) Miller

Tenure at Spruce: 21 Years

Education & Prior Work Experience: Got his feet wet (so to speak) as a Fire Control Technician aboard the Lafayette-class nuclear ballistic missile submarine USS Alexander Hamilton (SSBN-617). Later worked as a field service technician for Gerber CAD/CAM systems and plotters.

Main Duties: Bob spends most of his time at Spruce working on data conversions from other systems to SpruceWare.NET. He also does some hardware backup support, server setup, and .NET installation work.

When he's not translating data: Bob and his wife, Margie, spend many of their vacations in places where you can ski, scuba dive, and/or sail.

Favorite quote: "You can observe a lot just by watching" (Yogi Berra)



Bob & Margie somewhere in the South Pacific

Is there something you'd like
to see in SpruceNews?
Let us know—we're always
looking for ideas.
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“Sorting can be
done by item #,
group/section,
or location.”

Woah! You can't go forward without backing up

No matter what software you have, what operating system it uses, or how old the server is, you depend on your system to help you maintain consistent practices and to automate your cash flow. It's easy to trust that things won't be changing, and we hope it's true when it comes to the integrity of data on your system—but, as Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, “the only constant is change.” If you have your head in the sand, take note: computers break; buildings burn; 100-year floods get things wet; tornadoes, straight-line winds, hurricanes, snow storms, angry employees, mice, and a thousand other things...well, they *happen*.

“We had millions of dollars in receivables on those computer tapes,” says **Jim Filipski**, owner of Little Falls Lumber in Little Falls, NY. In a pair of fires set by an arsonist in the autumn of 1996, he lost everything—including inventory, invoices, statements, and

other paperwork. Certainly there was no computer system. So how is it they were back up and running in a temporary trailer inside of a week? They did what they were supposed to do: the office secretary had, as usual, taken the previous day's backup tape home with her, and once their new server arrived at the site and was configured, it was a simple enough matter to restore the data. Jim's simple advice? “Back up every *single day*.”

Barry Mertz, the Information Systems Department Manager at The Service Team / Country Junction, a 5-location SprucePlus user known as “the World's Largest General Store,” had an emergency contingency plan in place when their landmark 170,000-square-foot Lehighon, PA store burned to the ground. Their main server was not a loss, though. Not only did they have a tape backup offsite (“we keep 7 to 10 offsite at any given time,” Barry says), but they even

had large numbers on each of their servers to identify the most important ones to “save” in the case of an emergency. An employee who arrived onsite when the fire was safely distant pulled the wires from server #1, their SprucePlus server, and took it out of the building. “Who knew it would be as extreme as it was?” Barry says. It took them about 2-1/2 months to get a large tent in place after the massive fire, but the fact that their other branch locations were operating off their main server soon after the fire is a testament to the benefits of having a plan in place.

Every Spruce customer should be:

- Checking to verify your backup ran properly each day.
- Changing your tapes each day & making sure there is *always* a copy of your backup off-premises, day and night.
- Additional contingency plans help, too!

SprucePlus Features

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number, vendor, pay-to vendor and due date. Packing slips are pulled up with the SLIP INV and SLIP PRG options. The SLIP INV option will display packing slips removed individually by using the delete option in the AP Setup/Update screen, or those that have been invoiced. A selection list will come up after a specified starting packing slip number is entered. The SLP PRG option will display packing slips purged using the purge by date option. A selection list will come up after a specified starting packing slip number is entered. The SLP MRG option will display packing slips merged using the merge option when invoicing packing slips. A

selection list will come up after a specified starting packing slip number is entered

Finally, you can view G/L data for an invoice on the *A/P Invoice Inquiry* screen (whether or not it's been transferred to G/L). There is an option at the bottom of the screen for G/L Data. The system retains an Account Payable invoice's G/L data. The system stores the GL information in the A/P history file.

Point-of-Sale On the *Sale/Order/Quote* item-entry screen, you can sort entered items. Sorting can be done by item#, group/section, or location (building/aisle/bin). The option is found in the function box: MISCOPTS. In

the secondary function box you will find the options: SORT ITM (to sort by item), SORT G-S (to sort by group /sections) and SRT BAB (to sort by location).

On the *Sale/Order/Quote* item-entry screen, you can also merge like items (this is also found in the secondary function box under MISCOPTS). When selected, the system will combine any sequential line items that have the same item number and unit price. You must sort the entered line items by item number before selecting the merge option to be sure all like items are sequential.

More tips at www.spruceI.com.