

APPLICATION STORY



Dimension Fuels Product Design Firm's Exponential Growth

"In just a few weeks, we came back to the retailer with a revised prototype and they were blown away. Instead of testing our product in 100 stores as originally planned, decided to expand testing to over 1,300 stores. We could never have had that kind of fast turn around time without our Dimension 3D Printer."

— Wendy Steele
Co-founder & CEO,
Tape Wrangler

Tape Wrangler is a woman-owned product development and manufacturing company that attributes rapid revenue growth in large part to product design made nimble by a move to in-house 3D printing.

Founded in 2006, the Traverse City, Michigan-based company brings innovative, high quality products to the marketplace. Among its offerings are a line of specialty consumer products that add value to households and professional applications, including its popular Tape Wrangler™ heavy-duty tape dispenser.

During its first year of business, Tape Wrangler worked with several different design bureaus to create 3D models for product development and was unsatisfied with the results. "Outsourcing proved to be too costly, time-consuming and inefficient," said Wendy Steele, Tape Wrangler co-founder and CEO. "In addition to time and expense, we had to go through the trouble of getting the design service bureaus to sign non-disclosure agreements to protect our intellectual property."

All that would change during a visit to the Dimension 3D Printing booth at the Pack Expo trade show. After learning more about Dimension 3D Printers, Wendy and her husband Rick Steele – Tape Wrangler co-founder and COO – were confident that bringing 3D printing in-house would be a wise business decision.

The Dimension Solution

Less than a month later, they purchased a Dimension 3D printer from Fisher/Unitech – a Dimension value-added reseller and leading provider of product life cycle management solutions serving Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri and Kansas.

"Fisher/Unitech specializes in helping companies like Tape Wrangler improve their product development processes," said Tom Miller, of Fisher/Unitech's Grand Rapids office. "It's been exciting to see the success Tape Wrangler has had with the Dimension 3D Printer since it brought 3D printing in-house. The return on investment has been more than impressive."

Since purchasing a Dimension printer, Tape Wrangler's growth has more than doubled and projections for 2009 look even more profitable. "Gone are the days of expensive and the inconvenient outsourcing," said Rick Steele. "The printer allows us to produce functional 3D models we can take on the road and demo at trade shows – without the expense, delays and privacy issues that can be associated with service bureaus."

One of Tape Wrangler's biggest successes with the Dimension 3D printer came when they met with a major national retail chain about having one of their tape dispenser designs marketed under a private label brand. The mass retailer reviewed the original design and suggested a few tweaks to increase the product's appeal to consumers. Tape Wrangler quickly re-designed the product and printed a functional 3D model with their Dimension printer.

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In addition to the ability to quickly produce models, Tape Wrangler is thrilled with the high quality and fine feature detail delivered by its Dimension 3D Printer. Many of the company's products are highly engineered – some of its pieces requiring tolerances down to 1/250,000 of an inch. "The strength, level of detail and appearance rivals a final production piece and it makes our printer a priceless design and marketing tool," said Rick.

In addition to revolutionizing the speed and efficiency of Tape Wrangler's product design efforts, Rick has found it useful in other applications he files under "Fun". "I've manufactured a wall-mount for a large wooden eagle in my office and bases for custom clocks my father fashions out of World War II airplane gauges," said Rick. "I even manufactured cardholders to accommodate Tape Wrangler's new business cards that, unlike most, read vertically. The applications for our Dimension 3D Printer seem endless – and its fun!"

Tape Wrangler's products are available at ACE Hardware, True Value and on their Web site, www.tapewrangler.com.



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