



**NAME:** Charlie McMurray

**TITLE:** Sales Manager

**COMPANY:** Charles McMurray Co.



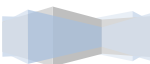
In today's cyber-driven business world, Charles McMurray Co. -- wholesale distributor of cabinetry hardware -- is a holdover from another era. The third-generation family business admittedly is slow to incorporate new technologies, preferring the tried-and-true principles on which it was built in 1946. Those old-fashioned values, touching everything from customer service to staffing, have served it well and, according to sales manager Charlie McMurray, continue to do so.

Being a family-owned operation in itself is an advantage, says McMurray, who shares sole ownership of the company with his father and brother. With accountability to shareholders a non-factor, he identifies serving customers as well as the firm's own personnel as the core focus. "Because we're a family company, we treat our employees like family, and I think our customers feel that," he explains. The close-knit corporate culture has yielded an average tenure rate of 15 years for a staff that keeps Charles McMurray Co. running smoothly, even without the most current systems. "We've got smart people that have been around for a long time, so we can rely on [them] instead of having to rely on technology. We think it works for us," McMurray remarks.

In terms of customers, he says that is the company's primary concern -- an obsession, even. He believes that making profitability a secondary priority to customer service has helped the distributor gain market share. "We are focused more on our customers and not so much on the bottom line," he notes. The improving economy has helped as well, allowing Charles McMurray Co. to grow in every category, add new staff, and fortify its relationships with manufacturers. "When the economy is struggling or when the distributor is struggling, it strains those relationships a lot," McMurray points out. "And when the economy is growing and improving, it acts as a buffer to those relationships and helps improve them."

Not only does economic expansion foster healthier relationships between distributors and manufacturers, the company's membership in NBMDA achieves this as well. "Just having a regular opportunity to get together with our vendors to sit down and talk about how we can improve our common business is a great thing for us. We're kind of in an out-of-the-way place; people don't end up in our headquarters town of Fresno, Calif., just by accident," McMurray elaborates. "You've got to be intentional about getting here, not like Los Angeles or San Francisco or New York, where people are coming through on a regular basis. We're kind out of the way, but with NBMDA membership, there's a set opportunity to have those regular meetings with vendors that aren't going to just end up in our town by mistake."

Without the benefits of NBMDA support, that physical disconnect from manufacturers could be a drawback -- perhaps the only one, according to McMurray -- to having an operational base in Fresno. Otherwise, he says, the location is highly advantageous. Centrally positioned between San Francisco and Los Angeles, the firm is able to serve both markets equally well and generally is able to arrange single shipments that reach customers the next day. Charles McMurray Co.'s service market isn't limited to those two major cities, however; it stretches from the Oregon border all the way to San Diego. One of the hottest trends surfacing in the region, according to McMurray, is a European style to cabinetry look and function. In other words, he specifies, "clean lines and flat panels and really simplistic exteriors with high-end kitchen convenience items and drawer slides and hinges -- they all kind of fit well together. We're definitely seeing more and more of that on the West Coast."



At the same time, McMurray says there also is a trend of newcomers entering the market and selling comparable products – typically unassembled cabinets or imported cabinets coming from China – that threaten to nibble away at its customers’ market share. “Our customers get cut out of the loop typically when these imported cabinets come in,” he remarks. “So now the general contractor would buy the imported cabinet or flat-pack cabinet, as they call it, from somebody other than their local cabinetmaker.” While he says this is a challenge that has been repeated over the years, McMurray believes the opportunities in the market are largely the same, too; and they go back to the company’s old-fashioned ethics. “There’s opportunity in continuing to serve our customers well by focusing on their needs instead of our needs,” he declares. “Focusing on customers always creates an opportunity.”

## **About NBMDA**

NBMDA is a multi-segment trade association representing the leading wholesale distributors of specialty building products and woodworking materials. Membership segments represent distributors and manufacturers that serve the independent building material, lumber, and kitchen and bath dealer, regional and national home centers, as well as those that serve production companies involved in cabinetry, architectural woodwork, stock woodwork, store fixtures, solid surface fabricating, plastics fabricating, general and specialty woodworking industries. For more information, visit [www.nbmda.org](http://www.nbmda.org).

