

HIGH POINT FURNITURE MANUFACTURER, CUSTOM CONTRACT FURNISHINGS, PIVOTS TO MAKING GOWNS TO COMBAT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ABOUT CUSTOM CONTRACT FURNISHINGS - CCF. Custom Contract Furnishings is a furniture manufacturer located in High Point, North Carolina. Established in 1989, the organization makes high-quality upholstered seating for the hospitality, healthcare and senior living industries. Custom Contract Furnishings (CCF) has been featured in national publications such as Network of Executive Women in *Hospitality* magazine, *Hospitality Design* magazine and *Boutique Design* magazine.

THE CHALLENGE. The leisure and hospitality industry was one of the hardest hit by the pandemic. CCF saw three months' worth of orders dry up virtually overnight in March 2020 due to the pandemic and the ensuing supply chain disruptions and cost increases. Luckily, in late March, Chris Morris, vice president at CCF, was contacted by Thomas Hurd of the Simmis Group, a health care business development firm. After contacting numerous textile and apparel manufacturers who were unable to respond, Thomas turned to CCF, who he had worked with for over twenty years, still looking for sources of gowns and masks.

Chris realized that their upholstery production was not that different from apparel manufacturing and pivoted to produce PPE, preserving CCF's workforce and business. The company first produced masks through a collective in Hickory, North Carolina, but Chris noted, "It was a lot more difficult than I thought it would be." Chris and CCF then decided to use its existing cut and sew capabilities to begin making Level 2 isolation gowns. The next step was getting the word out.

MEP CENTER'S ROLE. Thomas registered CCF with federal and state PPE portals, including one with North Carolina's Emergency Management Division. NCMEP, part of the MEP National Network™, was working with North Carolina's Emergency Management Division to help identify and vet potential NC manufacturers that could produce much-needed PPE and qualify for a state contract. Thomas completed NCMEP's form collecting information on PPE capabilities and follow-up conversations between NCMEP and Chris ultimately led to the North Carolina Emergency Management Division awarding a contract to CCF to produce Level 2 isolation gowns.

CCF is still producing isolation gowns and continues to maintain their registration and listing with the FDA. They are pursuing other opportunities for additional gown classifications. CCF was able to implement a quality management system, achieve their FDA registration and listing with the help of NCMEP's CARES Act funding. Chris emphasizes that the pivot to produce PPE as well as the invention of a new machine to help them do so essentially created a brand new company.

"It has been a pleasure and an honor to work with NCMEP. We are now on the verge of filing for a new patent with the development of a new poly gown press that will keep us competitive with PPE gowns coming from Asia."

-Chris Morris, Vice President

RESULTS



\$2,000,000 in increased or retained sales



\$125,000 in new products



\$125,000 in new investment



105 created or retained jobs

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