

Member Profile

Member Profile: Woodstock Percussion, Inc.

Year Founded: 1979

Location: Shokan, NY

Products: Manufacturer and distributor of windchimes and children's musical instruments.

Website: www.chimes.com



When Garry Kvistad started Woodstock Percussion (and their brand Woodstock Chimes) thirty years ago, he knew there was enormous potential for his business as long as he developed a wholesale business and was able to market his products to the general public. In the beginning Kvistad was producing a few sets of windchimes, but to increase the demand, he knew he needed to use the media. Garry decided to let his chimes speak for themselves. He sent sets of his original Chimes of Olympus® to a few select media people. It all started with Susan Stamberg at NPR's All Things Considered news program in 1980. She loved the chimes and invited Kvistad to be interviewed. The response to that exposure was phenomenal. A short while later, Kvistad sent a set of chimes to Gene Shalit at NBC's *The Today Show*. Once again, Garry was invited to be on the show and this time the exposure led to retail store owners contacting Woodstock Percussion. That's when the company really took off.

Getting noticed is one thing, but staying on the forefront of the industry is another. Woodstock Chimes stands out from the majority of other windchimes on the market today because of the quality of their sound. Many windchime manufacturers produce a product that looks a certain way, with little attention paid to the pitch and harmony of the sounds it produces. At Woodstock Percussion, windchimes are considered musical instruments. A lot of attention is paid to how the tubes vibrate. Each set of tubes is tuned to a specific group of notes, often from an existing scale or melody. The length of the tube determines the pitch, but because of vari-

ables in the tube diameter, wall thickness and temperament, each tube needs to be tuned individually. Woodstock Percussion uses state of the art tuning machines to accomplish this. The construction of the chimes is crucial as well. The density of the wood, the place where the string goes through the tubes, the placement of the clapper and the weight of the windcatcher are all factors in the correct sound of the finished product.

Woodstock Percussion manufactures a wide range of chimes; there is a set for every possible occasion and price range. Some of the designs are variations on popular current models with new colors or new elements. When a design is completely different it requires a great deal of sourcing for new parts or manufacturing techniques. Occasionally someone will send Woodstock Percussion a design that really stands out and they will license it, but the vast majority of their designs are their own original creations. Kvistad likes his products to be unique.

When a company becomes successful it is often tough to keep up with demand; this was a challenge Kvistad faced as his business grew. Up until six years ago, Woodstock Chimes were manufactured domestically. While everything else is done in Shokan, NY, the chimes themselves are manufactured in many parts of the world, in safe facilities with humane working conditions that are inspected often. This allows Woodstock Percussion the margin needed to grow the company.

Another key to keeping a company growing is staying ahead of the curve and Kvistad seems to be way ahead. Woodstock Percussion has been using computers since the early 1980s for product design and for controlling CNC machines. They also had the foresight to register the domain name www.chimes.com early on. The latest "green" craze is nothing new for a

company that has produced wind powered products for thirty years. Reduce, reuse, recycle has always been part of Woodstock Percussion, way before it became chic. In fact, Kvistad built his first metallophone from an aluminum lawn chair he found at the local landfill in the early 70's. In addition, many Woodstock Chimes are made from laminated bamboo components, bamboo being a sustainable material that can grow much faster than hardwoods. This is a company that is looking to the future and ways to make that future better.

There are many factors that contributed to making Woodstock Percussion the successful company it is today. It is similar to the many notes that

make up a melody working with each other, each in just the right spot at the right time. One factor in their success is their dedication to a quality sound. This focus on quality and sound has also brought the Woodstock Music Collection, the children's musical instruments that Woodstock Percussion manufacturers and distributes, awards and acclaim over the last few years. The various children's instruments have been given outstanding reviews by *Creative Child Magazine*, *Family Fun Magazine* and *Time Magazine*. Of course, Woodstock Chimes have also earned their share of accolades as well from magazines such as *InStyle*, *Fortune Small Business* and the *Wall Street Journal*. It is great when ingenuity and being truly invested in the product come together this successfully, like a piece of beautiful music.



A supersized Woodstock Chimes that stands in front of the Woodstock Percussion Inc. Facility in Shokan, NY.