

# The finisher's map

"Step panel" provides visual and written record of desired finish

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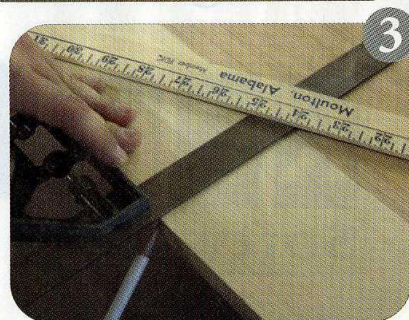
**GETTING THE SAME FINISH EACH AND EVERY TIME** requires more than just your memory. If an individual can see millions of color shades, it is difficult to visualize that same color each time. Sure you can write down the steps you took, but if you change species or the wood color changes slightly, then you have a color change.

You need a starting point and a series of reference points on your way to the great finish your customers want. From a simple to complex finish, a visual map is beneficial to you, your employees and the customer. Creating a map, or a "step panel" (Picture 1), will produce a visual and written record of each step you take to create the desired finish. The step panel not only can be used as a map, but also for quality control checks and a visual document that the customer signs off on. Now each employee and the customer can see, and not try to imagine, what the color and sheen are that were previously discussed when the project began.

To begin a step panel, the wood

species or multiple wood species must be selected and glued (Picture 2) together. Allow yourself enough area of each species to see the various natural characteristics or defects. In our sample, the glued-together pieces consist of two species, oak and birch, with the two oak pieces representing solid and veneered stock. It was estimated how many steps might be needed as we wanted to create the same uniform color across all three pieces (Picture 3). Three inches were allowed for each step as we felt this would give us enough area to see all the natural characteristics of each particular piece of stock. Keep in mind the last portion of the completed steps should be equivalent to two steps, or in our case, six inches. This provides a larger area for the customer or final inspector to view and compare. The panel in the pictures is roughly 16" wide by 30" long.

We would recommend that





you make several step panels at the same time so you have the customer's signed-off copy along with enough panels for each work station used in the production of the product. Multiple panels allow various employees each to have a visual reference point as to the look that was created for the customer's product. The step panel in this instance also becomes a quality control device.

Once the panel is glued up, a sheet accompanies the panel(s) that allows for each step of the operation to be recorded and any notes added. The sheet not only records the color and sheen used, but the following also should be included:

- 1) Customer or project order number
- 2) Wood species
- 3) Type of glue
- 4) Various grit sizes of coated abrasive used
- 5) Stain(s), including manufacturer, and if reduced, by what amount with what type of reducer
- 6) Filler, including manufacturer, and if reduced, by what amount with what type of reducer
- 7) Sealer, including manufacturer, and if reduced, by what amount with what type of reducer
- 8) Topcoat(s), including manufacturer, and if reduced, by what amount with what type of reducer

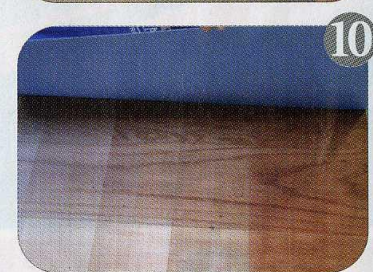
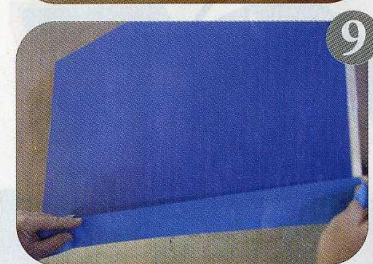


- 9) Specialty steps, including manufacturer, and if reduced, by what amount with what type of reducer
- 10) Wax and or polish

The entire panel is sanded to the coated abrasive grit stated, in our case it was 120-grit, then wiped off with a tack cloth. The first three inches of white wood (Picture 4) are covered. Now the various steps are completed, and each time the next section (Picture 5) of the panel is covered. In our case the specialty steps included cow tailing (Picture 6) and smudging (Picture 7). After all the steps are completed, remove the tape and paper (Picture 8) used to cover each step. Always cover your completed step panels with a protective opaque cover (Picture 9) as protection against damage to the finished side of the step panel as well as guarding against color change during continuous exposure to sunlight. This cover may contain advertising features on the exterior such as your logo and customer's name. On employees' panels, place on the inside a sheet containing the various steps with notes attached.

Remember, creating a step panel gives you visual reference points (Picture 10) at each step of the finishing process and removes the guessing as to the look each step needs to create for a final successful customer satisfied finish.

You can create your own schedule sheet by using the information numbered previously in this article with col-



umn headings such as: Step number; Step Description; Material name or number; Manufacturer, and; Notes. **MW**