

# BOATBUILDERS WHO OUTSOURCE THE DIRTY WORK

The owners of Mass.-based Chauncey Creek Boats say they've made production more efficient and cheaper



Two Massachusetts men (Richard Feinen, left, and Adam Reed) are using their computer expertise to build 37-foot Down East-style boats in an innovative way.

By Michael Hauenstein  
STAFF WRITER

Two former high-tech workers have started a new boat company based on lessons learned in the computing and telecommunications industries.

*"It's a traditional Down East boat, but it's high tech in a way. And it's a much better finish than other boats in our class. It looks like a Colonial home."*

— Richard Feinen

Adam Reed and Richard Feinen are the men behind Chauncey Creek Boats, a Mass.-based outfit that specializes in the custom finishing of traditional Down East boats. Reed had been doing some repair work on boats, including Feinen's, when the two started thinking of a business of their own.

"When I found out about how they build boats, I was shocked. I only knew about building computers," says company president Reed, 44, of conventional boatbuilding processes. "It's a really slow way to build boats."

Contract work and powerful computer-aided design technology form the basis of Chauncey Creek's approach.

"We're taking that same business model [from the high-tech industry],

and applying it to boats," says Feinen, 46, vice president of sales.

For its first project, called the Chauncey Creek 37, the company bought a bare Duffy 36 from builder Atlantic Boat Company of Brooklin, Maine. Reed, who worked as a computer and telecom engineer, scanned and digitized the hull and deck. The process took three months, but won't have to be repeated for future Duffy 36s.

Using 3-D computer-aided design creates a solid model in which to lay out the interior and systems.

"We model every aspect of the boat," says Reed. They can then work within the model to make sure everything fits.

A customer, for example, could submit a 2-D drawing of how they picture the boat's interior. Some of those dimensions might not be possible, and Chauncey Creek will manipulate the model until the customer says, "That's what I want."

"They can actually get a feel for what their boat is going to look like before it gets built," says Reed. The process is faster and less expensive than physically mocking up an interior, he says.

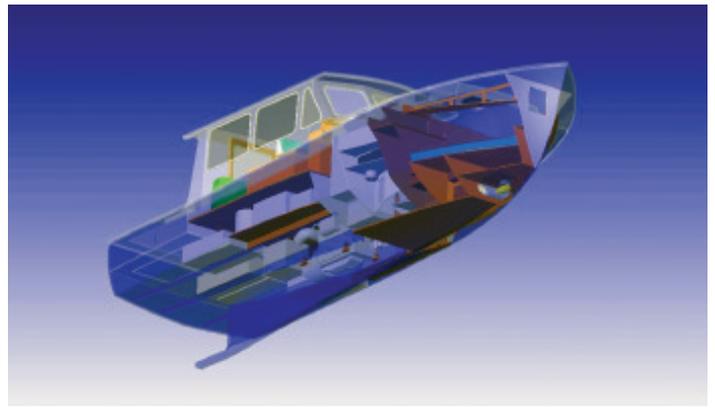
A production boat company, on the other hand, might simply use solid modeling to build the tooling for a boat, Reed says.

Design work is done in-house, then the company outsources parts construction before final assembly in Chauncey Creek's 11,000-square-foot manufacturing facility in Boxborough, Mass. Corporate offices are in nearby Concord.

Chauncey Creek removes the overhead that comes with equipment like CNC routers and planers. "We make trim; that's the level we do. There's four guys in the shop," says Reed.



Very little manufacturing is done at the Chauncey Creek shop. Rather, construction is outsourced and the components are then finished off and installed by the Chauncey crew as the boat is assembled.



“The more we can outsource, the happier we are.”

Interior work is done by East Coast Interiors, a specialist based in North Dartmouth, Mass., that has experience with airplane interiors as well as boat companies such as MJM and Hunt Yachts.

East Coast can take Chauncey Creek’s database directly and load it into the CNC routers, and make full interiors for the company.

“It just drops into the boat. We can put the galley in in an hour,” says Reed. As an example of the arrangement’s efficiency, the dresser and bulkhead come as one unit, and cabinets get finished in a spray booth rather than on board.

“It yields a much better project, and it’s a much faster way of building,” says Reed.

Working with East Coast raises the level of quality, according to the pair. East Coast co-founder Dave Boswell travels up from North Dartmouth for critical parts of the installation, Feinen says.

“Bristol Cushions is a partner now, too,” says Reed. “We’ve aligned ourselves with guys whose business is high end. We’re not boatbuilders who want to build soup-to-nuts, we go out and find [the best vendors]. Then it can’t help but be high quality.”

The company also has the flexibility to change vendors.

“It’s a traditional Down East boat, but it’s high tech in a way,” says Feinen. “And it’s a much better finish than other boats in our class. It looks like a Colonial home.”

Reed points out that the boats are built in America — Massachusetts — and with a \$420,000 base price cost two-thirds that of the competition.

The first boat was built on spec. For the second boat, the customer drew his requested layout on a JPEG digital image file from the Atlantic Boat Web site. He was very specific, including in the sketch a wine rack and a cabinet for his large cooking pot. Reed also had a four-hour design meeting with the customer.

“There are some things you want to tool, but you avoid it because then you would always build them that way,” says Reed. “Choosing upholstery isn’t customization.”

In addition to fitting the interior,

**Chauncey Creek Boats scanned and digitized the hull and deck of a Duffy 36, and used the 3-D computer-aided design to create a solid model in which to lay out the interior and systems.**

Chauncey Creek bonds the hull and deck joint, which is mechanically fastened, by glassing over it.

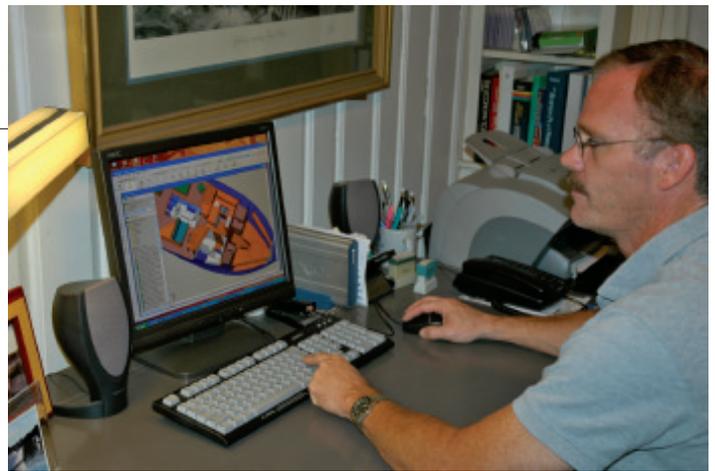
The company could build other boats the same way it builds the Chauncey Creek 37, Reed says. It would just take a couple months to digitize the new boat.

Reed started digitizing the Duffy 36 in January. It took 1-1/2 months to scan, and another month-and-a-half to model. “Now I have something nobody has, not even Atlantic Boat,” he says. “Anybody who’s building high-volume, high-quality furniture is doing it this way.”

The company is planning to build six to 10 boats a year. Feinen says they have already set up a small dealer network.

One of the marketing strategies is to avoid floorplanning, Reed says, so dealers won’t have to lay down hundreds of thousands of dollars up front.

They also have chosen dealers —



such as Rex Marine in South Norwalk, Conn. and Roger Herd & Associates in Hampton Bays, N.Y. — that can provide service, Feinen says.

The main service yard and warranty center is at Chauncey Creek dealer Niemic Marine Inc. in New Bedford, Mass.

Reed says he is very comfortable with the business model, because contract

building is what he’s done for the last 20 years. They are also confident in their customers.

Prospective owners are predominantly sailors and experienced boaters who want a traditional boat.

“Our customers will never be a first-time boatbuyer,” says Reed. “Our customers tell us what they need.”

[www.chaunceycreekboats.com](http://www.chaunceycreekboats.com) ■