

The Empire of Cookies

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I tip my hat to Rockler – they’ve made a whole industry out of cookies, bench cookies of course. If my memory serves me right, in the beginning there were just cookies – doodads to hold your workpiece of the bench surface. I just use scrap wood myself to achieve some level of elevation, but my “elevator technology” doesn’t have rubber facing to prevent sliding.

Over time, and over a continuous series of innovations, Rockler has introduced Cookie Plus work grippers, Cookie cones to protect the Cookies, risers if you need more Cookie height, and extra-long (or high if you prefer) risers if you need even more height. The bench Cookie world of solutions is intended for sanding, staining, and drilling – enabling the woodworker to work without having to move the work piece or damage his bench. I suspect in many applications the bench cookie can replace a clamp.

While the bench cookie might be considered an accessory in your workshop, Rockler has gone even further by introducing accessories for your accessories. The list includes T-track risers for bench cookies and a cookie storage container – their version of a systainer – and if that’s not enough, even a Cookie storage rack master kit.

I’ve always been interested in the business side of things – just one of the reasons I found the recent Saturday guild meeting with Shannon Rogers and the business of wood so fascinating, but I digress. I have no idea what percent of Rockler’s revenues derive from bench cookies and their respective add-ons, but I would guess that the Cookie product line represents a significant portion of their marketing budget.

While I do find the constant bombardment of email promotions to be annoying, I have to give credit to Rockler for being innovative and turning Cookies into Cookie dough. A similar comment might apply to the company for its broadband thrust into dust collection. However, dust collection, in my humble opinion, falls into the category of “must have” while bench cookies do not. They are something you can easily live without. But I digress.

Other vendors also sell their own version of cookies (like Bench Dogs) but no one else that I am aware of has created such a cookie product line kingdom. Other suppliers have created, at least in the marketing sense if not in the R&D category, an extensive portfolio around glue, or specifically glue messes. Think of glue brushes, bottles, mats, paddles, trays, rollers, and spreaders – lumped together on websites and in promotions for the convenience of the woodworking customer. But these empires are typically not based on proprietary products. Rockler stands out in this way.