

Meet Julie Lewis, Owner at Lewis Woodwork

Jim Ries: Hello and welcome to Java with Jim. I'm Jim Ries, Director of Business Development at Offit Kurman. Joined here today with Julie Lewis, Owner at Lewis Woodwork. As if you couldn't tell from the background there.

Julie, how are you today?

Julie Lewis: I'm great, Jim. How are you? Thanks for having me.

Jim Ries: I'm doing well. Can't wait to hear all about this. The background is very intriguing. Julie, thanks for joining us. Tell us about Lewis Woodwork. What do you guys do there and what makes your company different from other companies that are in the same industry?

Julie Lewis: Thanks Jim. So, yeah, so, my husband and I own Lewis Woodwork. We're a small family business outta Columbia, Maryland, and we have our wood shop where we hand make and engrave culinary boards as part of a whole client gift service. We have three adult children and they help us with that. And, yeah We work with, I market to businesses for their client gifts [00:01:00] and we love doing that.

We use maple, cherry, walnut. We source all of our wood locally. And I work with companies to set up their personalization and their branding for their boards and, make for a really nice, long lasting, memorable gift for their clients. We also have a website where we do sell, individual boards for consumers, but I really focus on marketing the businesses.

We work with real estate agents financial planners, lawyers, and, this fall we really started working with interior designers, kitchen remodel companies, home builders, and just recently luxury hotel and restaurants. So yeah, we are, I'm excited to be here today to share more of what we do and get our name out there.

Jim Ries: Great. Julie, if you would, describe what a culinary board is, and then in real simple terms, you're selling these to kitchen designers and construction, contractors, real estate agents, [00:02:00] et cetera, but explain how they're using these.

Julie Lewis: Yeah, sure. So, I have one of our smaller ones right here.

This is Maple Cherry Walnut. A culinary board, is a board that's used in the kitchen for serving and preparing food. Our boards are all double sided. We set up the branding on the back for companies and engraving on the front for personalization. And really, I, with what's going on right now with people really realizing that plastic cutting boards aren't good for us 'cause microplastics are getting into foods. It's even more important, I think, that we're using hardwood boards and something that makes us very different from our competitors for cutting boards is that how we finish our boards.

So some companies will not finish their boards at all. They'll just leave as the raw wood. And then most cutting board companies will use mineral oil, which is petroleum based, which is not good for the wood and not good for the person. What we do at Lewis Woodwork is we [00:03:00] use all natural finishing oils.

We use orange peel oil, tongue tree oil, and bees wax, and we coat our boards with four coats. So when you get to hold our boards, you see how smooth they are, and that keeps them water resistant and protected, and keeps the wood looking beautiful. These colors are all the natural colors of the wood.

There's no stain in there. So when we work with companies, they're looking to give a long lasting gift that's gonna keep them remembered. Something that your, their clients are gonna, be able to use. And we love that. I've had quite a few clients talk to me about how they go back and visit their clients and their boards are propped up in the kitchen as like usable art.

So it's not only a practical gift, but it's a really, it's one that. They can be used and seen and enjoyed whether someone cooks or doesn't cook. Everyone is always cutting up a cheese block or, cutting up some fruits and vegetables. We have different size boards, Jim, we have, our nine inch small bar boards for like cutting up like a [00:04:00] lemon or a lime at your bar. Also like 12 inch boards that are popular for cheese boards. We have clients who'll put those in a gift basket. And then we have like 18 inch charcuterie boards 14 inch by 12 edge grain boards for cutting where we can put juice grooves in.

And then our big like 18 inch long boards for cutting boards. So like home remodel companies and home builders, they love to give a really nice cutting board after finishing a project. Makes for a really nice gift and keeps them remembered, keeps that relationship with the company going for after the project is done.

Yeah.

Jim Ries: Great. Thanks for the further explanation. So Julie, when it comes to Lewis Woodwork, what are you most proud of?

Julie Lewis: I think what I'm most proud of really is that we built this business from scratch. So my husband was he always loved to do woodworking as a hobby. And when we decided to do this, we created every aspect of it ourselves.

[00:05:00] The designing the patterns of the boards. I have some boards behind me, you can see, the, working on what we wanna do with a whole process for our clients. Unlike a lot of companies where you go and you order everything online and you go through a dropdown menus and you pick your font, you put in your name, we work with clients to set up their engraving for exactly how they want it.

Jim, for their branding. If they don't have a logo, we can create something with a saying whatever they want. And then personalizations, they're not stuck in a box. We have clients that are being very creative of what they want us to engrave. So we do all that ourselves. And yeah, Just the whole, we have a whole gift service with a gift box that we've created.

I forgot to mention, I talked about what other companies are doing with the mineral oil, but I didn't really get to mention, I forgot to say what we're doing. We treat our boards with all natural finishing oils and we actually make our own board butter, probably a little tin here. That we treat our boards with. So we use orange peel oil, tongue tree oil, and bees wax. And [00:06:00] so those natural oils is what really keeps the boards looking amazing and keeps them water

resistant. So we include that in with our gift. I have our little thick box here, which I'm really proud of. We created this all ourselves with the designed our own box.

We include a thank you card for our clients. I write a little hand message on here and you know i'm really proud of the customer service that we provide. So I go out and I market our business, but what I really love doing is providing an excellent customer service. So I work with clients so that we get everything exactly how they want it, mailed on the dates they want it, whether it's a real estate agent, they want it for closing, or if it's an onboarding gift for a financial advisor and they want it, sent to their client or at the end of a, kitchen remodel project, making sure that it gets out when they want. Yeah. So thanks.

Jim Ries: Right. So Julie, what do the next six months look like for you and Lewis Woodwork?

Julie Lewis: Yeah, thanks for asking Jim. I plan on [00:07:00] continuing to market our engraved cutting boards like I have been looking to get even more into working with more kitchen remodel, interior designers and home builders.

But new for us in 2026 or it is gonna be working on going more into custom woodworking things like tables, so think kitchen tables, dining room tables, conference tables for companies, and then things like countertops, butcher, block tops, island tops. Basically, we already have everything in processed with our cutting boards who are just expanding that into a larger size.

We have all our manufacturing, processes together. So yeah, we're excited to go, into more of that offering those and working with some of the people that we're already working with their clients. Mm-hmm.

Jim Ries: Can't wait to see those products. Julie, here's the fun question. What do most people watching this video not know about you?

Julie Lewis: Yeah, so I had to think about let's see. I think probably it would be that, how long my [00:08:00] husband and I have actually been together, we are high school sweethearts. We started dating when I was 16 and he was 17. We got married right outta college and moved from Boston to Baltimore.

We've been here ever since. We've been together 38 years. 32, married, six dating and I think most people probably know about our children. We're a really tight-knit family and we work together very closely. They help us out. But yeah, I wouldn't have it any other way than working with my husband, Bill.

Jim Ries: Very cool. Thank you for sharing that.

Julie Lewis: Yeah.

Jim Ries: Julie, thanks for spending time with us. And thanks for the show and tell behind you. The wood looks phenomenal. And we appreciate that and I hope to see you sometime soon.

Julie Lewis: Yeah, that would be great, Jim. Thank you so much for having me.

Jim Ries: All right. Bye

Julie Lewis: Bye.