

START CO.: HAGER SUPPORTS MEMPHIS REVITALIZATION

by Ginny Powell

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According to *Entrepreneur* magazine, Memphis is the 15th hottest city in the U.S. for a startup company. For Eric Mathews, Founder and CEO of Start Co., staying in Memphis after attending school at Rhodes College made perfect sense.

Interested in enhancing Memphis's entrepreneurial spirit, Eric moved his company headquarters to a renovated brick building in the heart of downtown. His not-for-profit business, described as "part venture development group, part accelerator, and all work" continued to grow; to the point where he needed to make a decision—move again or add additional space.

Because Eric enjoys being a part of the revitalization and urbanization that makes Memphis such a hot commodity, he decided to stay put, expand and reconfigure his existing space. His vision was to make the space something unique and modern while still giving a nod to the building's history, which is why just the right doors were a critical component of this renovation.

Being a member of the Mathews' family has advantages when designing doors. Eight years ago two generations of Mathews decided to purchase National Custom Hollow Metal Doors & Frames, of Little Rock, Ark. Each family member brings specific strengths to the business. Eric, being a tech guy, streamlined the warehouse stock by using bar coding on all the components. But the guiding hand is the family



patriarch, Chris Mathews, who has 35 years working in the doors and hardware industry.

Eric started the process of designing his office's custom doors by talking with his dad, Chris, and brothers Shea, National's Vice President; and Evan, Vice President of Operations and General Manager. Eric knew he wanted stainless steel doors, having installed a few stainless steel swing doors when he first moved to the downtown location. It was important to him that there was plenty of natural light throughout the office, so full glass doors were a must. Clear doors also mirrored his philosophy of transparency within the brand. Further, he thought a "barn door" style of sliding doors would be a

better fit for his overall design rather than the traditional bypass or pocket concealed sliding doors.

DefendDoor, the stainless steel doors and frames division manufactured by National, has provided doors on several corrosive environments and food service projects. While they have manufactured sliding doors before, the material was typically paintable galvalume.

After numerous logistic discussions, it was decided to include Steve Foree, Door Division Manager for Pyramid Interiors. National has worked with Foree for almost a decade, and they felt confident that he could provide the missing components, such as developing the right solution for hanging the doors. When Steve received the initial call, he was quick to say he'd help them in any way he could.

Foree has installed quite a few sliding doors in his years in the door and hardware industry, but this project was truly unique—the weight of the stainless steel doors was a key factor. The doors were manufactured from 16 gauge #304 stainless steel with full stainless steel glass light kits by National Guard Products, and ¼-inch clear tempered glass, and weighed approximately 250 lbs.

In deciding which sliding door track to use, Foree remembered receiving a brochure on the Hager 9710 sliding door hardware. The unique design and modern look matched the design concept Eric Mathews was looking

for and would also support the weight of the stainless steel doors. Foree was further intrigued by the simplistic installation description. "I had been looking for a project to try this hardware out on, and this was a perfect opportunity," he said.

In thinking through the manufacture and design process, a finished look was decided upon. Instead of leaving the wall openings wrapped in sheet rock, cased open stainless steel frames were installed. Two-by-ten headers were also placed in the wall cavity to provide additional support to ensure the overall integrity of the opening long-term.

For the doors to clear the stainless steel cased open frame, one-half-inch shims were installed behind the 9710 sliding door hardware track. The shims can't be seen and the doors look sharp sitting in the opening with the cased opening frame surrounding them. "The Hager 9710 sliding door track and hardware along with the Hager 25B US32D flush pulls really complements our doors," said Shea Mathews.

While this project first appeared as a simple remodel, it took a lot of pre-planning and discussion. "Nothing like this would have happened if it wasn't for the willingness of Chris, Shea and Evan Mathews with National Custom Hollow Metal Doors and Frames and Eric Mathews with Start Co. to sit down and talk it through," said Foree.

Once all the components were on the jobsite, it took just a week to install the doors and hardware, and without issue. "Everything about this project was as simple and as cut and dry as could be," said Foree. "The design, the Hager 9710 sliding door hardware, and the installation went great."

Accolades were also expressed by Chris and Shea Mathews. "Without Steve and his team, this project would have been impossible," said Shea. "It was Steve and Pyramid that selected the Hager 9710 sliding door hardware, custom look and the installation and operation details."

Eric Mathews has enjoyed the compliments the doors receive when entrepreneurs, partners and business associates tour the office. Visitors often ask him where the doors came from. He tells us, "It's nice to be able to share with them the family business and process of creating these custom doors."

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