



WESTON FOREST GROUP PHOTO

Weston's Peter Ekstein, left, and Rick Ekstein started out together with the family-owned business.

## Thriving on the theory of change

**Weston Forest Group**  
**www.westonforest.com**  
**Location** Mississauga, Ont.  
**Size** 200 employees  
**Sector** Wood products manufacturer  
**Market** International

When Rick and Peter Ekstein started in the family business, their father told them straight up: "The only thing I'm going to offer you is opportunity. You're on your own." Today, the brothers, who are equal partners and serve as president and chief executive respectively, make a point of putting opportunities in front of their people on a daily basis. "The majority grab that opportunity and run with it," says Rick Ekstein. "The minute you stop is when they start looking for another job."

They have also infused the wood products manufacturer with a culture of change. "There is a tremendous amount of talk today about change, but most of it is change for change's sake," says Mr. Ekstein. "We take it to the next level. Internally, we say, 'change or die.' We are always looking to take our business in new directions to help add value to customers, suppliers and staff. Today, you have to have a culture of change and be willing to make changes as the environment around us changes."

The company did just that when, as a result of the strong Canadian dollar, it changed from being a heavy exporter to a heavy importer. "We are able to turn on a dime and take advantage of market opportunities."

That flexibility was the result of a restructuring in 2006 that saw divisions become distinct companies, each with its own strategic plan, facilities and resources. "The key to success today is to be the best at what you do every day. And we were having a daily struggle for resources. By splitting into separate organizations giving each group their own physical facilities, operations and administrative groups, we've allowed each company to be extremely focused. Everyone in the company is working towards the same goal and the results have been tremendous." *Mary Teresa Bitti, Financial Post*