

Should I sell Plywood or Particleboard (furnitureboard) cabinetry?

The answer depends on your situation as a cabinet seller. While many in the general public and even some in the kitchen and bath industry itself think of plywood as a better product for cabinet box construction it tends to also be more expensive, usually 20% higher (only 10% for Bridgewood products).

Many cabinet installers prefer to install plywood cabinets because as long as the thickness of the material used is the same plywood is about 25% lighter than particleboard in virtually all cases. While this may seem like a mere convenience to carpenters or installers it can actually make an install turn out better by allowing the installer to be more precise. This is so because handling a lighter cabinet while lining cabinets up, leveling them and supporting them on the wall can all be accomplished with greater precision due to increased ease in manipulating the product into its final install position. Another benefit of plywood's lower weight is that it helps reduce damage to cabinetry during shipping since it is easier to handle for truck drivers and other people who need to move it around.

Generally in terms of mechanical fastener holding power, plywood holds screws and nails better than particleboard. However, even this is not always the case. High quality particleboard like that use by Bridgewood is actually superior in mechanical fastener holding strength to some low quality plywood products.

Commercial grade particleboard of 45lb density or greater like that used by Bridgewood is an excellent product. Particleboard is actually wood, reconstituted with glue to create sheets of varying sizes. Because these sheets are produced in a highly controlled environment with precision equipment the dimensional tolerances are extremely tight. This means that particleboard thickness from sheet to sheet is far more exact and consistent than is plywood. Further, particleboard will not warp, bow or twist while plywood will. When it comes to dimensional stability and consistency particleboard is viewed as a superior product for the production of frameless cabinetry which requires very tight dimensional tolerances.

Particleboard can have decorative finishes applied that not only look like real wood but also have better moisture and scratch resistance than the real thing. Particleboard cabinets are widely sold and are structurally capable of having granite and other stone countertops installed on them without concern of failure.

Many people hold the belief that plywood is more resistant than particleboard to incidental contact with water (short duration exposure that would be wiped away within minutes and not left to soak). This sort of opinion is often based on anecdotal or random personal experience. What is clear, is that prolonged exposure to water (soaking in standing water) will have significant negative effects on either product in a roughly equal amount of time.

So in the final analysis the question really is not is plywood better than particleboard. It is, "Is plywood better to suit the needs of my contractor and my customer on this particular job or is there a cost motivation that gives particleboard an edge due to budgetary concerns?"