

## **From Hand-Carved Railings to Scalable Growth: How INNERGY Helped Florida Stairworks Reinvent Its Operations**

### **Executive Summary**

Founded in 2011 by veteran stair builder Doug, Florida Stairworks & Carpentry began as a two-person operation and has grown to employ 80 people, specializing in high-end custom residential staircases across the U.S. With roots tracing back to Doug's carpentry career starting in 1979, the business quickly evolved into a high-demand niche, producing complex stair systems unlike anything else in the market.

As the company scaled, legacy tools like spreadsheets and kanban boards created operational bottlenecks. Recognizing this, the Florida Stairworks team turned to INNERGY. Through software and education, INNERGY has enabled Florida Stairworks to improve job visibility, reduce manual processes, and scale sustainably. Today, the company is on track to hit 100 employees and is prepared for continued growth with INNERGY as its operational backbone.

### **Background: From Apprenticeship to Artisan Business**

Doug's journey into stairs began serendipitously. As a journeyman carpenter in the late '70s, he caught the eye of a mentor who recognized his natural aptitude for stair work. After honing his craft, including intricate hand-carved circular handrails, Doug went out on his own, eventually co-founding a Chicago-based stair company. When the recession hit, he moved operations to Florida and opened Florida Stairworks in 2011.

The business began with just Doug and one other installer, but his hands-on experience across installation, manufacturing, and sales gave him an edge in growing the team and maintaining quality. As demand for highly customized, one-of-a-kind staircases increased, the operation scaled rapidly, but their systems did not.

### **The Challenge: Growth Outpacing Systems**

By the time Florida Stairworks reached 50 employees, it became clear that their growth was outpacing their systems. The team relied heavily on spreadsheets, manual data entry, paper files, and a 5-by-14-foot kanban board to track jobs and inventory.

These methods worked well enough at smaller scale, but Doug recognized the breaking point was coming.

*"Our systems were going to be broken in two years if we didn't change," Doug said. "I didn't want to set up something temporary again. We needed a solution that would last."*

### **The Solution: A Platform for Sustainable Scaling**

Doug had followed INNERGY for years through Architectural Woodwork Institute (AWI) events and industry conferences, even hearing INNERGY CEO Marc Sanderson speak several times.

Five years ago, he officially made the move to INNERGY, focusing first on work order management and job tracking before expanding into inventory and estimating.

Key outcomes included:

- **Centralized Data:** Instead of entering data multiple times across systems, INNERGY's opportunity-to-job workflow eliminated redundant entries and reduced costly errors.
- **Eliminated Manual Boards:** The shop removed their kanban board, physical job tags, and manual inventory bins in favor of digital tracking in INNERGY.
- **Remote Accessibility:** Doug can now manage the business from anywhere, including during vacations, using INNERGY's cloud-based system.
- **Improved Job Costing:** Real-time visibility into work order performance allows Florida Stairworks to drill into overruns, investigate labor misallocations, and improve accountability.

*"We don't have to go pull a paper file to figure out who's managing a job," Doug said. "We can see all our inventory, job timelines, and labor data in one place."*

### **Key Results: Growth, Efficiency & Visibility**

Florida Stairworks' implementation of INNERGY has driven measurable improvements:

- **From 2 to 80 employees** and on pace for 100 in the next year
- **Real-time job costing** allows management to catch labor misallocations immediately
- **Inventory tracking** across multiple buildings
- **Digitized workflows** replace whiteboards and spreadsheets, improving visibility and accuracy
- **Streamlined onboarding** for estimating, using INNERGY to track and manage every opportunity

Doug emphasized, *"We used to do cost studies after the job was done. Now we do it in real-time and can act proactively."*

### **Beyond Software: INNERGY's Community & Education**

INNERGY's value wasn't just in the platform. Doug and his son Chris have attended INNERGY's Summits and Forums since joining, virtual and in-person, and sent staff to key events as part of professional development.

*"The room is full of people who want to grow," he said. "It's inspiring. And it pays back tenfold."*

The Florida Stairworks team also worked closely with INNERGY team members to adapt estimating modules to fit the unique needs of stair manufacturing. Because each stair is custom-built and rarely repeated, Florida Stairworks doesn't benefit from templates the way cabinet makers do.

### **Looking Ahead: Customization, Estimating and Scalability**

Florida Stairworks is continuing to work with INNERGY to further refine stair-specific estimating capabilities and explore enhancements like Gantt charts for better schedule visibility.

Doug also envisions INNERGY supporting:

- Visual production scheduling
- Automated Gantt chart generation for both internal teams and customers

*“INNERGY isn’t just a tool,” Doug said. “It’s a system that helps you change how you think and operate. And if you don’t evolve, you become a dinosaur.”*

### Lessons Learned

1. **Start before you're “ready.”** Florida Stairworks adopted INNERGY before the platform fully supported their stair-specific workflows — and made it work. They didn’t wait for perfect conditions to scale.
2. **Customization takes collaboration.** Rather than settling for a generic fit, Doug worked closely with INNERGY to tailor estimating and inventory processes for stair manufacturing.
3. **Visibility drives accountability.** Real-time work order and job costing tools allow Doug’s team to track progress, spot inefficiencies, and take corrective action fast.
4. **Software is only part of the value.** Forums, Summits, and peer relationships within the INNERGY community have been essential for learning, growth, and continuous improvement.
5. **You can’t scale on spreadsheets.** The transition from kanban boards and Excel to INNERGY eliminated duplicate entry, reduced errors, and enabled remote management.

### Conclusion

Florida Stairworks & Carpentry is proof that with the right blend of craftsmanship and forward-thinking leadership, even the most traditional trades can scale successfully.

By partnering with INNERGY, Doug and his team have created a business model that combines artisanal quality with data-driven execution.

As the company approaches its next growth milestone, INNERGY remains a trusted partner in driving clarity, control, and continuous improvement.