



From a 10-square-meter production area, Carlo's business has definitely flourished throughout the years. Now, it has become a source of livelihood for 130 workers.



Crafting Bamboo to Great Heights

Carlo's Bamboocraft Furniture and Furnishing

A young man in Tayum, Abra, who could not make it to college, turned to bamboo crafting instead and used it as his ladder to entrepreneurial success.

Carlo Balneg never imagined being at the helm of a large-scale bamboo crafts production business. Carlo started out with a working desk in a 10-square-meter production area. Above it are recycled tarpaulin materials that serve as a roof amid the thick stands of bamboo in Abra's municipality of Tayum.

A largely upland area of 105.7 square kilometers with just a 50,000 population, Bangued serves as the commercial hub of the province despite its limited agriculture, cottage industries, and trade.

However, Bangued's bamboo industry employs hundreds of people and now showcases the use of this abundantly available and indigenous material that sustain the community. Among the industry's members during its infant stage was Carlo's father, who acted as his mentor.

CRAFTING SUCCESS

A craft Carlo learned from a young age became the key to his success. He takes pride in their bamboo products, making sure every detail is done right.

SUCCESS TIPS

- 1. Always be good to your employees.
- 2. Evaluate any challenge at hand as to its cause and how it can be surmounted and prevented in the future.
- 3. Always be ready to work hard and remain patient.
- 4. Believe in yourself—whether in good times or bad.
- 5. Be disciplined. As a boss, it is the only way you can discipline others while also sharing virtues with them.
- 6. Always keep trying until you succeed.
- 7. Don't succumb to vices and illegal activities. These will ruin your business and your life.



CRAFTING AT A YOUNG AGE

The eldest in a brood of 10, Carlo was only 12 years old when his father taught him the craft.

Since going to college was not an option, Carlo pushed himself to work as hard as he could, making bamboo his medium just as canvas is to the painter.

He cut and scraped bamboo, and took various jobs before working as a driver for a non-government organization that produces bamboo-based products.

After 10 years of exposure to full-scale production, he found the courage to do it alone in 2004.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), along with other government agencies like the Department of Science and Technology, taught him modern finishing techniques in product development through seminars, and enabled him to acquire machines.

With this support, he was able to serve an order of 50,000 pieces of placemats. In 2012, the client made repeat orders totaling 117,000 pieces worth Php 4.7 million, enabling Carlo to buy a house for his family and provide livelihood to more than 60 people.

Trade shows arranged by DTI connected him to buyers. Now, his craft has turned into a flourishing business with 130 workers.

"Even if sometimes you really don't make sales in trade fairs, it would come back to you tenfold," Carlo says of the many clients, buyers, and exporters he has met and done business with.

SHARING SUCCESS

Success was not just his. "One of my employees even told me that he was able to buy a motorcycle and a house," shares Carlo, who is grateful of DTI's support.

"We were also able to build a house for [my siblings] and send them off to college," Carlo says as his eyes glance along the length of a bamboo pole reaching out for the sky.



THE BAMBOO FURNITURE AESTHETICS

- 1-2. Carlo's business produces a wide variety of bamboo products—from décor to furniture.
- 3-4. First, the nodes of the bamboo are smoothed by a plane.
5. The bamboo is then cut into various lengths and sizes, depending on the production requirement.
6. The pieces are then assembled.
7. The craftsmen make sure that the product fits their standards on solidity.
8. For the finishing touch, they glaze it with coats of varnish.



DID YOU KNOW?

Bamboo is classified as a grass and is the fastest growing plant in the planet. It can grow up to three feet every day depending on climate conditions.

HOW DTI HELPED

Through DTI's SPIN project (Subcontracting Partners for Innovation Network), Carlo was able to run the production smoothly, making better products both in quantity and quality. Through the Project Kapiti's Mentor MIE program, Carlo and the bamboo craftsmen underwent skills training that improved their production rate to full scale. They also participated in DTI-sponsored SiliT Pinoy Trade Fair that brought them buyers, clients, and exporters.