

The image shows the exterior of a coffee shop named 'Buddy Brew Coffee'. A black awning extends over the entrance, with the shop's name in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below the awning, a red brick wall is visible. A small, square window is set into the brickwork. To the right, a glass door or window is partially visible. On the brick wall, there is a small, square sign with a black background and a yellow outline of a dog's head.

**BUDDY BREW**  
COFFEE

# AWNING WORKS INC.:

## ELEVATING EMBROIDERY

When Steven Schechner and his wife, Deborah, purchased a Clearwater, Florida, awning business in 1985, he never imagined it would grow into a multigenerational family enterprise. It began when Schechner and his wife left their home in New York, traveling thousands of miles to a new life in a warmer climate.

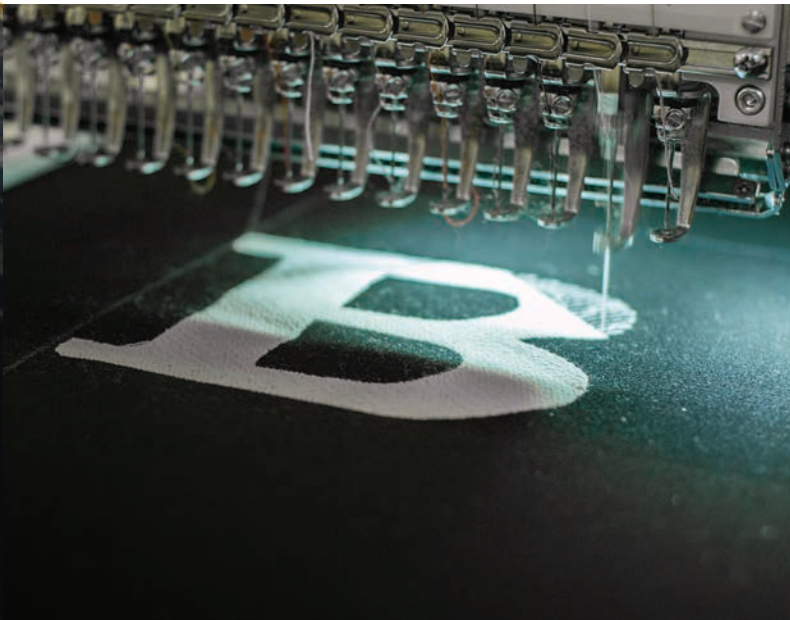
“We decided to make a life change without knowing what lay ahead,” Schechner said. “I have family in Florida, and it made sense to move near them. We didn’t have any idea what we’d do for a living down there.”

With a background in the aerospace industry and extensive experience in design and manufacturing, Schechner found work as a consultant, but the spirit of change hadn’t left him, and he realized he wanted a new career to match his new home. When he came





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across an advertisement for an awning company, Schechner knew he'd found his new path, and Awning Works Inc. was born.

The company began as five employees in a 1,500-square-foot facility. The business grew slowly at first, originally selling only three products: clamshell awnings, fabric awnings and vinyl windows. But the Schechner's persevered by expanding product offerings based on customer needs and building relationships with contractors, designers and employees.

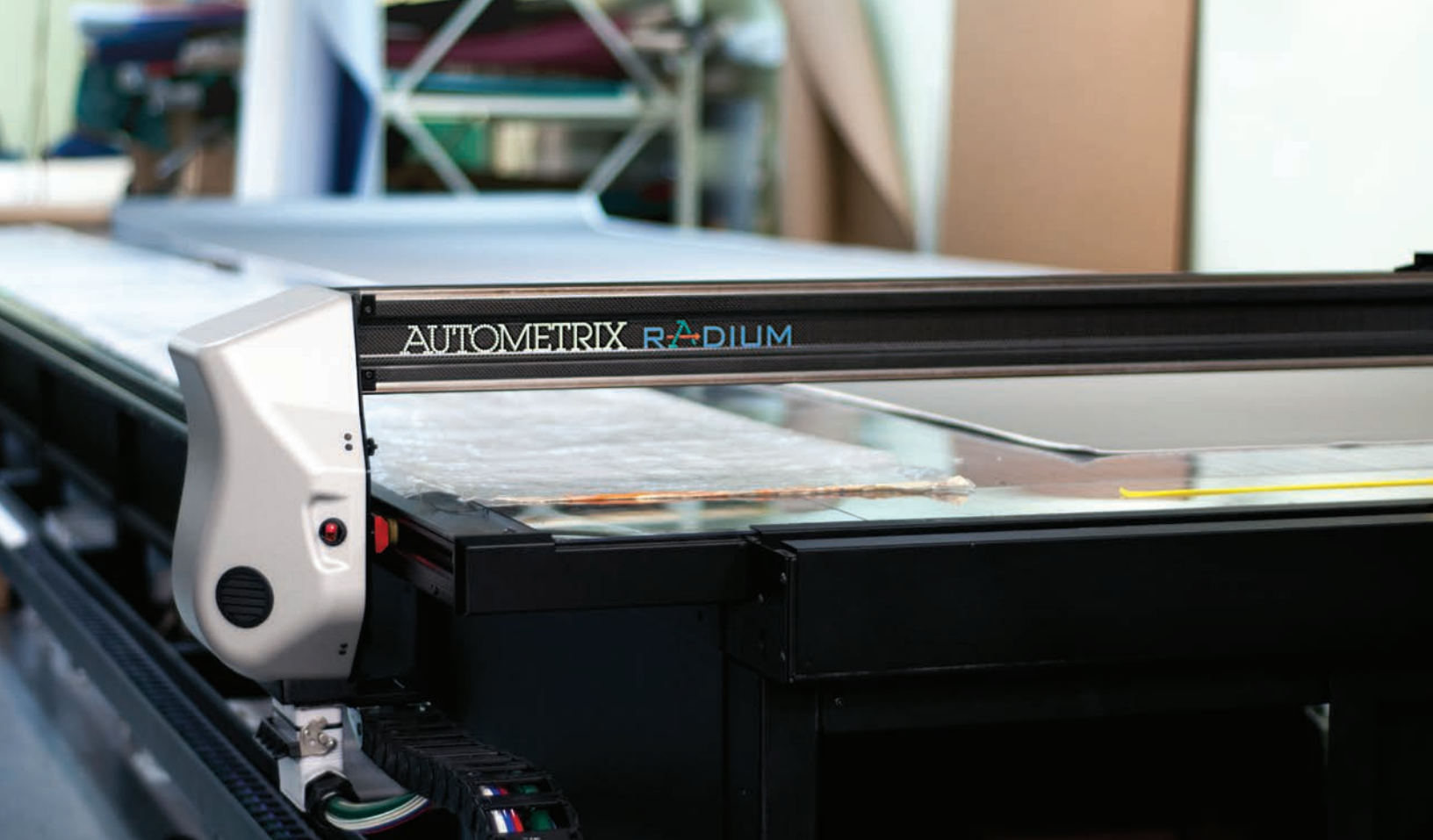
"We run our business as a family," Schechner said. "We're unique that way. Treating people with dignity and respect is our company culture, and family inspires that."

Family was not always a part of Awning Works. Schechner was reluctant to push his two sons, Jeremy and Jarrett, into the family business, instead allowing them to pursue their own passions. As boys, Schechner's sons worked in the shop cleaning floors and learning how to produce and install product, but for a time, the boys pursued other areas of interest.

"I didn't want our sons to feel obligated to take over a company they weren't interested in," Schechner said. "Even when it's your business, it's not only about you."

But their sons did return and brought to the table expertise from various fields. His son Jeremy created the company's e-commerce web development division in 2003 and now serves as the head of





all e-commerce operations. Jeremy's wife, Wendy, also joined the company as the vice president of marketing. Schechner's other son, Jarrett, has his general contractor license and is involved on the awning side of the business.

"Now that the kids are involved we have more resources," Schechner said. "We're a solid family business, and now we're taking on a new growth path."

Looking back, Schechner never thought Awning Works would grow as much as it did. The 48-person company has broken ground on a 20,000-square-foot addition to the manufacturing space at its current facility. The company also runs numerous websites and stores, including flagship brand Patio Lane.

"Business really took off when we launched Patio Lane," Schechner said. "The building has become a destination. It welcomes the design community to collaborate with their clients to create a holistic design approach of an entire space, both indoor and out. But it's not just for designers; everyone is welcome. It's a place where people can build a vision of their customized space and bring it to life."

One of Patio Lane's greatest accomplishments is providing clients with customized products. Proprietary cushion-building software on the website allows clients to create products that meet their exact specifications and order online. Patio Lane also offers the option to use Sunbrella® Embroidery Thread for a truly outdoor UV-resistant decorative pillow or cushion.

When Sunbrella Embroidery Thread was initially released, Glen Raven's distribution subsidiary, Trivantage®, approached Awning Works to be the first vendor to offer Sunbrella Embroidery in a large format capacity. Now Awning Works has the unique ability to create custom, large-scale projects that can fully withstand harsh weather conditions





with ease. One of their first projects with Sunbrella Embroidery Thread was a custom awning for Buddy Brew Coffee, a Tampa-based craft coffee roaster. Schechner and his team have goals of international operations and believe they'll get there by focusing on customization.

"Sunbrella Embroidery Thread is going to be the new normal for outdoor customization," Schechner said. "Unlike other companies, we are willing to take on the challenge of making a client's vision a reality. We're the go-to company for this kind of work, and thanks to our continued partnership with Trivantage and Sunbrella, we know our business will grow even more."

Despite the potential for growth, family is still the heart of Awning Works. Schechner's grandchildren already work in the shop, doing everything from erasing whiteboards to cutting fabric samples and even setting grommets. Yet as he was with his own kids, Schechner is only providing the opportunity to join the business, not demanding it.

"My children are what I'm most proud of," Schechner said. "I never expected them to come back, and now they're running the company. We even have a succession plan in place that we constantly discuss and work on. And now we're making decisions and building the business in a way that, if the grandchildren want to be a part of the company, it will be there for them, too."

On the web at [awningworksinc.com](http://awningworksinc.com)

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**STEVEN SCHECHNER**  
President of Awning Works Inc.

