

## Steven Bankler, CPA Client Spotlight

Before Michael Bass imagined a business around foam, he spent his boyhood helping out at his parents' stucco business. Grandma and Grandpa Bass had started the business in the 1920s and when they retired in 1971, his parents, Jim and June Bass, assumed it and moved it to a warehouse on Hoefgen Street.

When Michael graduated from UTSA in 1985 with a bachelor of arts degree in management, his parents were using foam for local construction projects but had to order foam from Dallas. So in 1993, Michael launched ACE Foam Designs part-time to fill that niche. In 1996, he focused full-time on managing his growing foam business.

When his parents sold the stucco company in 1997, ACE continued leasing their warehouse but relocated in 2002 to Florida Street, which today serves as its production plant. In 2007, ACE opened a second location on Carolina Street to house a showroom and office headquarters.

Michael employs a lean staff of 15. True to its slogan "*You want it! We can make it!*" ACE provides a diverse range of foam products for all types of customers and industries.

Some examples include the giant crown moldings that sit atop the entrances to Walgreens and the faux wooden interior beams featured at the Parade of Homes. The company also produces cast-stone fireplace mantels and architectural columns, and imports a line of Belgian paint-ready crown moldings for homeowners who want a more impressive profile than standard wooden crowns provide.

Michael finds the foam business surprisingly creative. Florists and caterers turn to ACE for unique, elaborate designs that make for memorable presentations. For instance, ACE created an entire Spanish village out of foam for a physicians' convention. ACE also constructed foam mirror images of NBA Championship trophies for the SPURS and



made giant ice cream cones that overlook the entrances of Freddie's Frozen Custard shops. ACE has even sculpted a life-size human head out of foam for a local artist to use in sculpting class and created a life-size 1930s "Woodie" station wagon for the Texas Surf Museum.

Foam products have practical applications as well. Huge foam blocks are made into floating docks or insulation for buildings. Concrete "block-outs" are used by general contractors to hollow out holes in concrete, such as when pouring foundations or creating a decorative wall for overhead expressways at intersections, such as those at East Loop 410 and McCullough.

ACE Foam Designs recently purchased Mission Stone, a local cast-stone fireplace mantle company. This acquisition opens the distribution market for ACE on fireplace mantels.

"Customers who visit our showroom are amazed to learn what they can do with foam," says Michael. "Foam also costs less than solid wood or concrete and typically requires less framing and labor."

Michael credits diversification with the success of his foam design business. "A friend likes to call my business 'Mike's wonderful world of foam!'" says Michael. "I enjoy teaching people about the possibilities of foam. Creativity of designs and finishes have been the keys to our growth."

For over 25 years, Steven Bankler has been the Bass family's accountant. "When I founded ACE, Steve developed a tax strategy for our business in order to minimize our taxes. He helped us handle the acquisition of Mission Stone. And today he helps with tax planning and investments," Michael says. "Over the years, Steve has helped my family save money, ensuring we keep more of what we earn."

ACE Foam Designs' showroom is located in San Antonio at 519 Carolina Street. Find out more by calling (210) 534-7272 or visit [www.acefoam.com](http://www.acefoam.com).

