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Is This a Screw Job?

Most of the time, when assembling or designing projects, we tend to think about joinery and glue – hide glue, yellow glue, gorilla glue, epoxy, cyanoacrylate, etc. But sometimes you just have to use screws. As is the case for myself, I'm sure that any reader of Bevel Cut has a fine collection of woodworking screws. Mine is pretty well organized (and labeled) by thread size with just a few drawers in the cabinets labeled "miscellaneous" for those screws I wasn't sure about. Upon seeing my "collection," the uninitiated visitor often asks me why I need so many screws.

My frustration with screws begins on the other side of the coin – those vendors selling hardware with "screws not included." Last month, I built a simple 7-drawer cabinet for my woodshop – nothing fancy, just something utilitarian. I found online a nice deal on ball bearing drawer slides, soft close and full extension, but "screws not included." You would think that any vendor with any business sense would either include the screws (a focus on customer satisfaction) or provide you with the option of ordering the correct screws at the same time you are purchasing the hardware (focus on customer convenience). You don't need a Harvard MBA to understand "share of wallet." Bottom line is that when I tried to install the sliders I discovered that nothing in my existing screw collection fit the bill, especially when I needed 108 of them. Off to Woodcraft to solve the dilemma. I was not going to pay \$10 in shipping for a \$5 box of screws. While there, I also bought a box of drawer front screws, anticipating the future.

In contrast, a few months ago I built a version of a wall-mounted, drop-down desk for my daughter-in-law. It was my first time using butler-tray style hinges, the kind you have to rout and chisel out an odd shaped opening into the desk top so that the hinge will be flat and in the plane of the writing surface when open. After only nine tries, (how annoying that these things come without any directions) I got the opening to be the right size, right distance from the edge, and correct depth in both the front and rear of the hinge opening (practicing on scrap of course). To look and feel right, the hinge needed exactly the right screws. Fortunately, they were included.

While these two recent episodes were different, both of them caused me to review my screw collection, notice how the screws were not all the same design even if not different in size, and think about woodworking screws and the different flavors in which they come. I offer the woodworking screw family tree for your contemplation. It may also explain why you have so many screw drivers. Indeed, it is a screwy situation!

Woodworking Screws

