



Factory Manager Warren with Dennis Weatherell and machine operators Nathan and Eric between the Felder CNC and panel saw purchased from Jacks.

Total Kitchens choose Felder reputation and Jack's professionalism

With the latest technology, a large, efficient workshop and an extremely well-organised marketing strategy, Total Kitchens in Te Rapa, Hamilton, is a business to watch. Operated by Dennis Weatherell and his wider family, Total Kitchens offers exactly that: design, manufacture and installation of all-things-kitchen.

Dennis has plenty of experience in the area. From a farming background he became an electrician, before moving into rural real estate and appliance retail. Together the family is also involved in running Kitchen Things in Hamilton, offering quality kitchen and laundry appliances. "I quickly noticed that many of the customers visiting our store asked if we also made kitchens" says Dennis. "Then an opportunity came up to get three local kitchen designers on board, so we did – and we've never looked back."

After a few years successfully having kitchens contract-cut

Dennis made the decision to start manufacturing locally. Today Total Kitchens has a team of four designers a production manager, an administrator and four staff on the floor in the factory. Their large factory also doubles as storage for the appliance store, yet still has plenty of room for their latest European machinery.

When it came to selecting what machinery to buy, Dennis did his homework. "I talked to a few machinery suppliers" he explains, "and then Warren [Factory Manager] and I did our research on the products we were being offered. We chose Jacks based on the professionalism of their approach, and the reputation of the machinery they were proposing. Jacks offered a complete service - from selecting suitable machinery through to installation and training. I really appreciated the way John Walton [from Jacks] listened to our business plan, then worked with us to choose the most suitable machines for our company's development."

At the heart of Total Kitchens' production is a Format-4 HO8 CNC, from Austria's Felder Group. "The HO8 is just the

right mix of quality, price and performance for us to do what we do now, and still give us the capability to increase production in the future" says Dennis. The Format-4 HO8 incorporates many features you'd expect on a European CNC: a Windows operating system that is intuitive, a separate drilling head, and automatic lubrication of all axes to ensure fast and efficient production. The centralised dust extraction system ensures a clean working environment, and safety features include monitored pneumatic pop-up stops and a light barrier safety zone system.

For edgebanding Total Kitchens have a Homag Ambition 1230AT, complete with airTec functionality for reactivating laser-edged tape. "Laser edging capability means we're at the forefront of technology, and can satisfy all our customer's demands," says Dennis. The Homag Ambition series – previously known as 'Brandt' – is NZ's most popular edgebander, and the AT models can use standard EVA glue or the airTec system. "The 1230AT has all the functionality we need, and – like the CNC – is capable of higher production if we need it later."

Rounding out the suite of workshop machinery are a Felder K700S panel saw, a trusty Janssens edgebander for curved shapes, and a Micronair dust extractor. "We've deliberately purchased a particularly good saw" says Dennis. "The CNC is our main machine for kitchens, but we're not limiting ourselves to just kitchens in the future. We have the skills in the factory for all manner of work, whether or not the CNC is available. The Felder saw gives us that flexibility."

With strong word of mouth, local print and radio advertising, Total Kitchens is busy across the wider Waikato. "Now with our workshop and new machinery we're in the position of having total control over the finished product, and therefore our customers' satisfaction" says Dennis. "That's exactly where we want to be."

