



Eric Thompson (right) and colleague Grant Pedder.

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edgebander critical for daily work

Originally from Kaitia, Eric Thompson has worked in Joinery from Matamata (Stanley Group) to Tauranga (HK Kitchens), with a stint in London as a CNC programmer and CAD detailer. He's experienced the stresses and strains of joinery shops large and small, so it's no surprise that in his role as the boss at Pacific Coast Kitchens he's not only got career and business goals to tick off, but also a lifestyle balance to be achieved.

"I'm trying to find the sweet-spot of smart production" he explains from the sunny showroom at Pacific Coast Kitchens (PCK) in Omokoroa, just north of Tauranga. "That balance between company size, production level, workload and lifestyle. The plan here is to recession proof the business. We're growing, the workload is good, and we've got sustainable growth that can be fairly quickly scaled depending on external factors."

It's this practical, balanced outlook to work that gives Pacific Coast Kitchens that friendly, local

feel. The team is eight strong: four on the workshop, two on site, an Administrator and Eric out selling, as well as programming the CNC. He's in the process of training a colleague to programme CNC now giving him more time to deal with customers, refine production, and generally keep PCK running efficiently.

When he took over the business almost 3 years ago Eric purchased a second hand Brandt to replace an ageing pre-glue machine. "I knew the edgebander that came with the company when we bought it wasn't compatible with our growth plans," he explains. "While many of the solid-timber machines have years of life left – because they don't get much work – the edgebander is more critical to our daily work. I knew we needed the speed and reliability of the Brandt."

Six months later Eric picked up work with a group house builder, so was in the market for an edgebander again. "The Brandt was an old machine. I knew that when I bought it. It did the job we needed it for – it got us up and running - but it was a stepping stone really, and I knew to sustain the type of contracts we were getting we needed a newer

machine." Having worked with Brandt edgebanders (now branded 'Homag'), and having experience of some of the competition in previous workplaces, Eric had no hesitation: "I called John at Jacks, explained what we needed, and we got on with it."

Eric invested in a new Homag 1120C, a heavy-duty machine with class-leading quick-change 1mm and 2mm radius scrapers for a fine finish. Other features including corner rounding, interchangeable glue pots and a NZ-wide reputation for quality and reliability. With limited space in the workshop then Eric also needed a small footprint, and the Homag fits all its renowned German engineering into a compact size.

For Eric, PCK is right where he wants it. "We've settled in our area now," he says. "From Bethlehem to Waihi was where we ranged, although we're now stretching up to Whangamata. We tend not to stray into Papmoa and Mt Maunganui – too much traffic! And too many other joiners. We've got good relationships with builders – some of them group builders – and it's keeping us busy."

Eric is focused on the residential market and PCK are very active on social media. "We put a bit time into Facebook and Instagram," he explains. "It's a great way to promote recent work, and we advertise on Facebook too. As we've built up the PCK brand then we've also taken local print advertising, and between the advertising and word-of-mouth we're getting a good response."

With his business on a good foundation, an excellent relationship with local builders, a good team in the workshop and a modern suite of machines providing a quality result, Eric is enjoying the benefits of hard work and careful investment. With golf clubs in the back of the car and his family living just a few minutes' drive from the office, his work-life balance looks just about right.

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