



Rob O'Keeffe with operators Karl and Daniel find the new Brandt eliminates much pre and post panel prep.

Brandt cuts edgebanding time in half

Twenty-five years ago, Rob O'Keeffe decided the overheads for his Wellington-based joinery shop were getting too high so he moved the business to the banks of the Whanganui river.

He hasn't looked back since, and Rob O'Keeffe Joinery has become part of the lower North Island's joinery establishment. The company is well known within the wider Whanganui region – the city's old buildings and cultural heritage offers a rich variety of work. They work further afield too; this month sees jobs in Wellington and Christchurch, and the team regularly complete work in Auckland. A family business too, Rob's wife Linda works in the office while his son Tony is an apprentice on the workshop floor.

Rob O'Keeffe Joinery is very much a traditional joinery shop, working mainly in the upper end of the residential market. With a wide range of machinery top-notch in-house skills, their work is in both solid timber and panel. The highly-skilled team's ability to tackle anything also brings in some of their more interesting jobs – at the time of writing the plans for a complicated timber staircase valued at over 100k were on Rob's desk.

"Diversification is key" explains Rob. "Diversification has carried us through some of the hard times over the years. Maintaining traditional skills is important. We don't want to end up in a situation where if a CNC machine

can't do the job, we can't do the job. We're seeing a lot of retirements in the industry at present, so it's a crucial time to invest in apprentices, and keep skill levels high."

Rob's investment in staff and skills has paid off because it's word of mouth that brings in the company's work. "We strive to communicate well during the whole job" says Rob. "We get good feedback on our skilled workmanship, but also the guys' onsite communication – and I know this helps us with repeat business" says Rob.

Rob keeps the workshop equipped to cater for a wide range of work required so he's always on the lookout for better ways to do things. This drive for efficiency led to a new Brandt Ambition 1220FC edgbander – a hot-melt machine featuring pre-milling, touch screen operation and corner rounding.

When replacing their old pre-glue machine Rob was quick to choose the brand. Brandt are renowned for their reliability and quality finish, and are the most popular machines across New Zealand. When choosing the specification of the machine Rob didn't just make the step to hot-melt edgebanding, but pre-milling and corner-rounding as well. "I'm not a fan of entry level machines" he says. "They never work as promised, and you can outgrow them quickly. I was looking for greater capacity, and time-savings." He's found both. "Getting pre-milling has taken our saw out of the equation, because we can cut the panels to the finished size, but

not worry too much about the quality of the edge. Any tiny issue with the blade is cleaned up by the pre-milling unit."

The Ambition 1220FC also comes with two easily-interchanged glue tanks, making colour changes simple and fast too. Corner rounding has helped their efficiency too explains Karl – the Ambition 1220FC's main operator. "We were still getting a good edge on the older machine, but now we're getting a really good tightness of the joint. We don't have to corner round by hand, or clean up afterwards. The Brandt's cut our edgebanding time in half."

As with all the machinery in the workshop, the Brandt 1220FC is clearly well looked after – and as a result Rob and his team are getting a top-quality finish to match the rest of their work. Just like Whanganui itself, Rob O'Keeffe Joinery keeps up-to-date and relevant, while preserving the skills and spirit of workmanship that have built their reputation, and ensured their ongoing success.



Postscript - As part of Homag Group's new one-brand strategy Brandt edgbanders are now branded 'Homag'. Model names (e.g. Ambition 1220FC) remain unchanged.



Supplied & serviced in NZ by W & R Jack
www.jacks.co.nz