



Hailee Gentleman with Production Manager Malcolm - needed to improve the speed of their edgebanding.

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Halving edgebanding time

Hailee Gentleman purchased Farquhar Design Kitchens in Te Puke in June 2018. Originally from Christchurch, and with a background in Project Managing up to 40 kitchen installations at a time as part of the Christchurch rebuild, Hailee had been keeping an eye on the Bay of Plenty in the years leading up to the purchase. All indications were that the BOP was an area on the rise, and for Hailee the kitchen industry looked like a good fit.

Rather than starting a business from scratch, Hailee purchased an existing business, therefore inheriting the reputation and connections that had been well established over 20 years. Since taking over Hailee has made several changes, including rebranding the business as FD Kitchens + Interiors, but she has been careful to maintain the business ethos of quality over quantity.

The original team consisted of Gavin Farquhar and two employees. In the space of just over two years that number has increased to nine employees of which two are award winning designers and four are master cabinet makers. Output has gone from two or three kitchens per month to seven or eight large projects per month.

Hailee is keen to keep the “handcrafted” aspect of cabinetmaking at the core of FD Kitchens + Interiors. Her intention is to use technology in areas that improve the customer experience and manufacturing productivity, while not diluting the quality of workmanship. Although FD Kitchens + Interiors use a modern kitchen design software package, they haven’t gone down the CNC path, preferring to cut and drill cabinet components the traditional way.

An area in the workshop Hailee identified for improvement early on was that the quality and speed of edgebanding needed to improve. A call to Jacks resulted

in a decision to invest in a Homag 1110 edgebander. The Homag offered quick-change glue-pots that can be swapped over in just minutes to enable glue colour changes that best match material colours. Finishing units such as radius and flat scrapers significantly reduced the amount of time required to clean-up the edges once they’d been through the edgebander. Hailee estimates that since investing in the Homag, time spent edgebanding has halved: an edgebanding job that once took eight hours to complete now only takes four.

Local businesses have been taking a keen interest in Hailee’s progress. In a male-dominated industry Hailee is breaking the mould - not just because she’s a woman but also as someone that has not had direct experience in manufacturing.

Hailee’s passion for what she does is obvious from the outset. Her eye for design combined with a strong focus on the customers experience are proving to serve her well, evidenced by the recent move into

a new 1000 sqm building. The new facility includes 400sqm allocated to a new showroom and office, while the showroom will display the latest in kitchen, wardrobe and bathroom design, as well as a “colour room”. The colour room is a platform architects can use to harmonise house design with their clients, with the kitchen at the heart of the design philosophy.

As Hailee says: “if you think good design is expensive, wait until you see how much bad design can cost.” Hailee is applying the same logic to her production: it pays to buy quality machinery when you expect quality results. And it’s those quality results that are driving FD Kitchens + Interiors success.

