

“These days it all comes down to saving time” Mathews Kitchens move to nesting

Most technology starts with the ‘big boys’ and eventually trickles down to smaller scale manufacturers.

Nesting has worked the other way, with smaller companies being the ‘first in’. With such a big impact on their profitability and ability to compete its not surprising to see such an across the board shift to nesting. Now the market has matured and the dust settled its interesting to take a look at typical smaller scale kitchen manufacturer and see what are looking to achieve with a move to nesting in today’s more mature market.



Mathews Kitchens in the Sydney suburb of Granville are just such a company as owner Tony Sahyoun explains

“I started up 18 years ago, there are five of us now and we do pretty much whatever comes in the door. Budget kitchens through to high end complete kitchen, home theatre, wardrobe and laundry fit-outs for the ‘Double Bay’ market. We rely on word of mouth so we take a very honest approach and our customers appreciate dealing directly with the people who will be building their kitchen for them. We use only the best quality German fittings, even on our lower cost kitchens as I want everyone who deals with Mathews to be a happy customer ready to recommend us to their family and friends.”

Tony was already using a Design Package to offer his customers a speedy and professional way to be involved in the design of their new kitchen and ‘see’ it in 3D before manufacture begins. He decided to upgrade this to the latest package from ‘Planit’ and with that came the possibility to download link to a CNC. Now the hunt was on for the right CNC for Mathews and Tony checked out his options at the AWISA exhibition.

“I looked at a big range of machines but ruled many of them out as too light to deliver the quality I wanted or too limited or slow in what they could do.” Even though Mathews are not a volume producer Tony faces the same big issue as all other Kitchen manufacturers. “These days it all comes down to saving time and I wanted a fast machine that didn’t have to take 2 cuts to achieve a top quality finish.” Tony could also see the potential of producing his own routed face doors so cantilever machines were ‘out’ as the accuracy of a ‘gantry’ supported at both ends was essential.

“Like most small companies floor space is at a real premium so I also needed a very compact machine based around 2400 x 1200mm sheet work but with the ability to use 3100mm sheets to get the best optimisation of door layouts.”

Tony decided on the ‘pocket rocket’ from Weeke, the CNC specialists of the German Homag Group.

“It’s very compact yet at around 5 tonnes I could see it was very strong. That means it’s seriously fast and I saw it cutting at higher speeds, producing great results in a single pass where others required two. The software was very clear and simple yet powerful and I really liked that too.”

5 months after installation Tony is happy to report that the expected benefits are there.” For example on our flat pack work what took us five hours now takes one. With our carcass work we cut out a full sheet in just 2 minutes, in one pass and its spot on. I like the flexibility too. The other day we had a guy walk in wanting half a dozen circular coffee table tops and we just did them for him there and then. Programming is so simple I said ‘give us 10 minutes’ but we were actually done in 5”

Normal Kitchen work is programmed from the office, automatically nested and sent down to the Weeke. “I haven’t added up how much board that saves us but it’s very noticeable and there are no mistakes. I like the smart software features like auto slowdown for difficult small components too and the ‘self teach and in-depth diagnostics. The training from Homag was excellent and we were confident with the software in a very short space of time.”

Cutter life was a concern, but hasn’t proved an issue as the rigidity of the Weeke combined with its unique ‘S/C’ bed damps down vibration with up to 10 times more efficiently than steel bed construction. “The very fast acceleration means were cutting at the correct speed quicker than other machines can too and that further increases our cutter life.”

A final factor for Tony was safety.” I was surprised to see the non existent or very basic safety equipment of many machines we looked at. The Weeke has full height mesh walls, an electrically locked access door and a light barrier curtain across the front. We’ve already inadvertently put that to the test and it’s a real life saver.”

All in all Mathews are very happy with their move to nest based manufacture and now excited about the future possibilities. “We already do some commercial work and now I am confident to expand that. We know we can deliver products to the highest quality, accommodate ‘difficult’ designs and deliver on time without having to stockpile and that’s important in a smaller space. The time savings from the Weeke make us very competitive and I produce as I need to so I’m not holding big board or work in progress stocks. I’m happy!”