



FACTORY manager Brent Coyle demonstrates to first-day apprentice Justin Waayer the attention to detail that makes Pridex proud of their name.

PRIDEX Kitchens is going places, and in order to do so the company has decided to keep all its manufacturing in Manawatu.

"Our goal over the next three to five years is to be positioned as one of the top five kitchen manufacturers in New Zealand, with 15 to 20 showrooms around the country, producing 100 kitchens a week from our new premises here in Palmerston North," says managing director Chris Prier.

No longer a one man band

Twenty three years ago Pridex started out as a one-man cabinet-making business offering furniture and joinery to the trade. It quickly developed into a business supplying framing and trusses, pre-hung doors, aluminium windows and custom-built kitchens. Ten years ago, however, Pridex made a decision to rationalise its operations to enable it to specialise in kitchen manufacturing for both the home

and developer markets. Since then the business has grown five-fold and plans are now firmly in place to see this growth accelerate five-fold again over the next three years, becoming the "employer of choice" to joinery tradespeople in the Manawatu. Throughout its expansion, Pridex has taken exceptional care in managing its investment in people, technology and location. In the past six months, a professional management structure has been created with the employment of an operations manager, production manager, factory manager, sales manager and group accountant taking care of the day-to-day running of the company.

This leaves Mr Prier free to concentrate on the company's strategic direction. The business recently entered the NZ Best Places to Work competition, and after staff were surveyed extensively the business was rated very highly.

"Despite this very pleasing result we are working to improve in all areas identified by our staff," said Mr Prier. "Features that staff particularly liked are the family-orientated work environment, active social club, team building and extensive personal development training. People are the key to the industry and where we want to go. It's a matter of sharing and achieving our collective visions, and all working together to achieve that."

Ongoing training to stay at the top

Pridex has always had an extensive training focus, and in the last ten years has helped many joiners complete their apprenticeships. This training is on-going with five apprentices currently in training, and will be one of the key factors in building a skilled work place. "The national skill shortages within New Zealand across all trades needs to be addressed and we are doing our bit to contribute," said Mr Prier.

To achieve the envisaged five-fold expansion the company recently moved its entire manufacturing operation to a new 10,000 square metre factory, warehouse and showroom on Railway Road, near Golf City. Ezibuy and Bunnings recently announced their intended move to the same neighbourhood, confirming the increasing attractiveness of the location.

"Even if we have to move some areas of our operation to other near-by premises as we grow, we will keep our head office and manufacturing base here in Manawatu," says operations manager Mike Clark. "It's so centrally located and ideally suited to our needs."

Showcasing the product

Pridex Kitchens has fourteen display kitchens in their Railway Road showroom, which is now the most extensive kitchen showroom in the lower North Island. "This way people can get a better idea of what you can achieve with kitchen design, decor and fittings, all on the same scale, and all alongside each other" said Mr Clark.

In expanding its distribution base, Pridex initially established a franchise showroom in Wellington three years ago. Having tested the structures and systems well, Pridex is rapidly expanding its franchise network with a new showroom in the Auckland suburb of East Tamaki. In the next few weeks, another franchise showroom is due to open in Upper Hutt, and shortly after that, one in Taupo.

"Eventually we envisage 15 to 20 showrooms around the country, with five or six in Auckland, all focusing on sales. The showrooms give Pridex an excellent visual presence in the marketplace which will be further complemented by our expanding web presence.

"As far as the company's products go, we are recognised for having a quality product. We have a five-year guarantee on our cabinetry, a life-time warranty on hinges and drawer runners. With our automated manufacturing everything is built perfectly to specification. Every kitchen is built individually to exact customer requirement," says Mr Prier.

Cutting out the middleman

There is often a perception that the DIY or kitset option is cheaper, but that's not necessarily true, according to

Mr Prier.

"When you compare similar products you will more often than not find that the DIY options are in fact more expensive, and at the sacrifice of choice. It is often more cost effective to come straight to the manufacturer, to cut out the middleman, and have the kitchen individually made for you."

There is also a great variety in the options and finishes that Pridex Kitchens can offer. Today's Melamine's are a far cry from when Pridex started out 23 years ago.

"With developments in technology and new resins, they're of a very high quality," says Mr Prier. "Today we have finishes that look real, stainless steel that is easy to keep clean and high-gloss paints that look stunning and are functional."

Staying ahead through technology

"At the end of this month, I'll be in Germany for two weeks at the largest international hardware and machinery fair for the industry, followed by a week in Italy looking at the latest European kitchen manufacturing trends and techniques. The purpose of this trip to clearly to identify key machinery and systems to completely automate another aspect of our manufacturing," says Mr Prier. The same innovative but practical thinking will continue to see Pridex Kitchens grow, while staying exactly where they are.

"Pride in our name, pride in our product, pride in our people and proud to be in the Manawatu."

pride in Manawatu

Pride in our Name,



PRIDEX managing director Chris Eden (standing, far right) and his staff share a common vision for the name of Pridex Kiwhana.

Pridex in Manawatu