



Brydon Maiava, Andy Crake and Matt Major.

from humble beginnings ...

As with many businesses in our industry Alternatives Manufacturing grew from humble beginnings. Dennis Major started the business the day after his daughter was born back in 1985. The first workshop was in his brother's garage and consisted of a single phase saw bench, hand router, drill and sander. It would take three days to cut and clash a kitchen carcass. Fast forward and today the workshop consists of the latest in CNC and edgebanding technology with an Italian designed WDMAX CNC and German made Homag edgebander.

Current owner Andy Crake joined the business in 1996, having just returned from a six months stint playing cricket in the U.K. Andy had absolutely no experience in the industry but Dennis recognized Andy's potential and offered him a furniture making apprenticeship, which at the time wasn't easy to come by.

Meanwhile the business had grown and was now operating out of a barn in Titirangi, west Auckland. In 2009, with Aucklanders spreading further into the countryside, new neighbors complained about the noise, so the business was forced to relocate to Keeling Road in Henderson – an established industrial area in west Auckland.

It was around this time Dennis and Andy started to receive regular visits from machinery supplier sales reps, one of which introduced Dennis and Andy to CNC machines. The extra space in the new workshop made

it possible to fit a CNC, so in 2010 Alternatives Manufacturing invested in a Masterwood CNC out of Italy. 2010 was also a significant year in that Andy and Dennis became business partners each owning a 50% share in the business.

Alternatives Manufacturing has predominantly focused on shopfitting. "Once Covid hit, shopfitting slowed up pretty quickly" says Andy. "Fortunately, we'd established good relationships with local builders. Demand in the residential space increased so we adjusted to meet the market. We've never had to advertise and don't even have a sign up yet at our new location."

Andy is now sole owner of Alternatives Manufacturing, with that transition having taken place in 2021. He'd been thinking about a new CNC for a few months when Jacks' sales rep Wynand Louw introduced him to the WDMAX DN-3409DE.

WDMAX CNC's are designed by Masterwood in Italy and manufactured in China. Every DN-3409DE model has the same specification: a 2700 x 1300mm table, 12kW main spindle and a 10 spindle drilling head. A highly automated manufacturing plant combined with standardization make WDMAX CNC's very competitive. With modern European performance and safety features, and weighing 3500kg, WDMAX represents excellent value for money.

Andy was immediately impressed with the WDMAX when he visited the Jacks showroom in Auckland for a demo. The Masterwood design influence was obvious to see. He also really liked the sweeper vacuum arm feature that's standard on all WDMAX Nesting CNC's. "I know you're supposed to use a vacuum cleaner to remove dust from the spoil board but in reality, the guys blow the table down between sheets. Dust goes everywhere. I'm very impressed

with the extraction performance of our WDMAX and it's quiet. There's virtually no dust on the table after a panel is processed. I think it's the air jets around the spindle that blow dust out of the routed channel that makes the difference. Then the sweeper arm vacuums the spoil board and whatever small amount of dust was on the table is completely removed. It makes a massive difference to the air quality in our workshop," says Andy. "I also like that we can add loading and unloading units to the WDMAX in future if we want to. I can see the unloading conveyor table being something we can benefit from if we need to increase output."

In the face of recent negative economic news, Andy remains positive. "It's been that busy over the last couple of years, a slight drop in demand won't necessarily be a bad thing!" – an attitude that clearly originates from those humble beginnings.

