

Small Business Focus

REGIONAL SPOTLIGHT - WAIRARAPA

Machine takes wood into glazed window market

Seamus Boyer

A WAIRARAPA company is looking to "revolutionise" the joinery market after buying a machine capable of producing double and triple-glazed wooden windows and doors.

Renall Doors in Carterton started testing its \$1.5 million machine last week after shipping it from Germany along with the five German engineers needed to assemble it.

The Weinig Conturex will produce intricate double and triple glazed wooden joinery, allowing the firm to continue producing exterior and interior doors as well as moving into the sizeable New Zealand window market.

Owner Cameron Shaw said at present "nearly 100 per cent" of the market in new or replacement windows was aluminium.

"Aluminium is sold as a cheaper, maintenance-free product than wooden joinery.

"But the advantage that wood has over aluminium is that it achieves a high degree of insulation, as opposed to aluminium, which is a good conductor of heat and cold."

Those who wanted top quality double-glazed wooden windows previously had to look overseas, he said.

"Being able to source [windows] in New Zealand will, we think, revolutionise the market here."

Mr Shaw bought Renall Doors in a receivership sale in 1992, and now employs 13 workers.

Before that he worked in the concrete industry in Wellington.

"I had absolutely no idea about joinery, and I still don't," he said.

"If you asked me to go out [to the factory] and cut some wood I would really struggle."

However, at the urging of factory manager Vic Jacobson he began to digitise production after buying a computer and basic Microsoft software.

In 1998 the firm bought its first programmable machine to produce doors, also from Germany.

It was a move that Mr Shaw described as an "absolute break-



Export hopes: Cameron Shaw, owner of Carterton firm Renall Doors, has recently bought a \$1.5 million machine to produce double and triple-glazed wooden windows. Photo: SEAMUS BOYER/FAIRFAX NZ

through for accuracy and flexibility".

The new machine would build on that by producing complex wooden window, french doors, bifold and other designs that would take weeks to produce if made by hand.

He said once the machine started to fill orders the windows would be more expensive - but of a higher quality - than their aluminium counterparts.

"We are thinking that we are going to be aiming at the top end of the market, and the top end of the market has always been wood," Mr Shaw said.

"We're not just going head to head with the existing market, we will be providing a new product to the market."

The company hopes to begin taking orders in two weeks.

As the machine is the only one in

the southern hemisphere, the company will eventually look to export its products to Australia.

"We have to get ourselves under control in the domestic market first but there is certainly some [export] potential there.

"But at the moment we just don't know what the demand will be.

"This is really a shot in the dark; we really and truly don't know what's going to happen."

ASK THE EXPERTS

Youth market

Q: I've realised that my technology business needs to move with the times and cater towards the youth market. Is there anything else I could be doing apart from having young people test my products?

A: One of the key tenets of business is "know thy customer".

If you're tailoring your products to a sector of the youth demographic, then you definitely should do more than just testing with younger users.

You should be able to define your customers, a description that may be derived from base behaviours. For example: "My core customers are teenagers who commute for at least an hour a day and own a portable music device."

Understanding the key behaviours enhances awareness of trends as they happen, creating risk and opportunity. Which one you end up facing often depends on how in touch you are with your customers.

Issues such as branding,

Team spirit key to startup venture's success



Nick Churchouse

AMAZING teams make me cry. Amazing music makes me cry. Last week I was blubbing righteously courtesy of Bon Iver and his superstar band.

The concert was part of the International Festival of the Arts, and as I got in touch with my sensitive side to the tune of Julian Vernon's version of guitar science and a dose of *Skinny Love* and more, it occurred to me that bands are a lot like startup companies in how they work.

You have the founder chief executive, normally the lead singer,



Startup success: Grammy winner Bon Iver provides a good role model. Photo: REUTERS

composition of a team for the type of business, which in essence says you need the right players for the game you want to play.

Vernon started Bon Iver with three buddies, and on stage last week he had the crew he compiled for their second album, eight dudes plus the techie; a wider set of talent to do a different job. You grow the team as you grow.

Too many startups think they can get by hiring talent in by the hour. This equates to hard yakka, zero buy-in and very costly. It can work in the short term, but to go the distance you need them in the team. The best mix to start firing is a set of people covering three core areas - technical ability, business nous and a deep understanding of the market and the customer.

One of the latest startups to

End of Season
not normally seen for th