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Artline – Moving Forward with Total Control



Main: Artlines new plant at Smeaton Grange, Sydney. Inset: Mike Kluver, Managing Director of Artline Kitchens.

Speaking from a new plant in Smeaton Grange, western Sydney, Mike Kluver reflected on the background of Artline Kitchens, owned by Mike and business partner Ed McCane, and the finely tuned operation of moving the whole company to these spectacular, 5500sq m, new premises. This impressive feat involved new software, new machinery and caused only 3 days of zero production.

"Thanks to the enthusiastic performance of everyone on the Artline team, we were able to accomplish the move into these new premises with a minimum of disruption", said Mike, "Not a bad effort when you consider we installed new CNC software, 2 point to points, 2 new beam saws, 1 new flat bed router and much, much more."

Artline started business 21 years ago as a wholesale manufacturer of quality, custom built kitchens, a marketing

philosophy which has carried through until now and will go on into the future. "Our customer base" said Mike "has always been specialist kitchen sales companies who choose to focus on the things they do best while leaving the sometimes frustrating job of manufacturing to us. Our policy of supplying a high quality customised product, a pricing structure that more than competes with the cost of our clients producing the products themselves and guaranteed delivery schedules, has been the foundation that has seen the company survive and grow since day one."

"This sales network now spreads across Sydney and into the far reaches of NSW. Of course, not having to deal with the day-to-day problems of sales and marketing, now done by our client network, means we can concentrate on the things we do best, the production of quality, custom made cabinets, doors and bench tops."

"It is fast, there are no limitations, and once a product is set up, the accuracy is 100% every time."



Completed jobs ready to go.



Two new Selco Beam Saws.



Eric Vanderlem and Shane Dodd.

"Our course is set toward technology. Our design and production systems are the best money can buy and are continually updated. Our challenge, is to react to the demands of our clients and manufacture everything they need. This focus on customised products has made us re-think the automation of our factory, we need to produce these special products as quickly and easily as standard products.

We eventually decided to use LearCom CNC automation software after seeing it in use at KT3, a similar operation, in South Australia. It is fast, there are no limitations, and once a product is set up, the accuracy is 100% every time. Our clients love being able to offer customised kitchens at competitive prices."



Mike went on to point out how one member of the team, Eric Vanderlem, was the driving force behind developing the in house job management system and implementing the new LearCom CNC software.

Eric's position with Artline is IT Manager with 3 IT personnel. His expertise with computers wasn't always as polished as it is now. When he first joined Artline in 1985, he hadn't used a computer and Artline didn't own one. Eric started as a draftsman and was involved in kitchen layouts the hard way on a layout bench. Before long, he was using a calculator to increase the accuracy. It was in the late 80's, Artline invested in a brand new Commodore PC 10, this was DOS based and pre Windows. Some of the more senior members in the industry will remember the 5" floppy disks instead of a hard drive.

"We have come a long way since then" said Eric, "I seem to have been on a quest to find the ultimate software ever since that first computer. We bought a very early cutting list program, which turned out to

be a real disaster and later moved up to an application called Kreate, which we used for quite a few years."

"Unfortunately, Kreate didn't provide machining data. Machining data input was done at the machine by the operator, not the best way to improve productivity. More recently we purchased a system which had a drawing package on the front end and although we persisted with this, due to our demands for customisation, we just couldn't

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get it working the way we needed to, so we went back to using Kreate."

"Standing still is not easy when you work with Mike Kliver. Before long he and I were on a plane to South Australia to visit the Farquhar group, now called KT3. They were using QuickCAM and CADCode systems to make cabinets, doors

and bench tops, on an assortment of machines. They were, in fact, doing all the things we wanted to do."

"Things moved pretty fast after that, we met with Peter Page and Kevin Addy, of LearCom, and selected the modules we needed for our set-up. We bought just about everything LearCom offered and started producing MDF doors. Over the next few months we developed our library of over 250 products, all fully parametric and extremely customisable. Today we can make anything, easily. There are absolutely no boundaries with QuickCAM, if you can think of it... you can make it, no other program can do this. We have more accuracy than ever before and all parts of the manufacturing process are faster and smoother."

"Our new Biesse Flat Bed Router was delivered to the new factory, and installed. When we moved in we simply hooked up the computers and started sending data to the machine. It started producing accurate parts immediately and was probably the most

painless part of the whole moving process."

"A bonus with this system is that QuickCAM is an Australian product and LearCom's technical support network is based in Sydney, rather than in USA, or somewhere else. Installing software is never easy, especially when done at the same time as buying new machines, turning manufacturing on its head, designing new products and moving premises."

"During installation and through the early stages you need back-up, and with LearCom that's exactly what you get. They even helped us develop other improvements that are not strictly part of the system. For example, in 6 months our clients will be able to order whole kitchens by email and the order will be imported into QuickCAM and sent to the machine. That's real automation."

You could be forgiven for thinking that Artline would take a rest at this point, but not a chance. Mike Kliver and Paul Davis - General Manager, are planning improvements and claim there is still a long way to go. "We still need more clients to fill holes in the network" said Mike "and getting new clients, and keeping them, needs really slick customer service. The Artline team has done a great job so far but we can still do better."

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For more information, visit
www.learcom.com



LearCom

Phone: +612 9980 7011

Fax: +612 9980 7066

Email: automation@learcom.com