

CDK Stone, Value for Industry

Article by Philip Ashley

CDK Stone is about people. Their vision? To bring value to the industry and their clients; to nurture great people who do extraordinary things.

In 1979 Paul De Kok came to Australia to head up the stone division of the Colson Group. In 1982, that division, Colson De Kok Stone, became CDK Stone when Paul and four partners purchased Coulson Group's shares. The company was run by only a few people selling granite blocks to monumental and commercial masons. There were some slate and marble tiles in the mix, some abrasives, diamond blades, chisels, tools, and the odd machine. At that time kitchen manufacturers were supplying mainly laminate or wooden benchtops, with the occasional stone top installed by a monumental mason.



Two of CDK's many prime movers are Joint Managing Directors James Woodyatt and Jonathan Height who both started with CDK Stone about five years after the company commenced. Jonathan mainly worked in sales and James mainly on the technical side. They've both grown with the business,

working very closely together since the early days. They complement each other and are open and honest about their abilities. If Jonathan sold a machine, he would often be found working with James to instal it. "Everything people do in a small business, we did," James recalls.



Above: CDK Stone Directors

As opportunities for CDK in the slate market decreased, Russell Santon, one of CDK's original partners, pushed for CDK to start importing stone slabs, a move that saw some growth in the company that accelerated when stone started to become popular in the kitchen industry. At that time, most stone machinery used in Australia was designed mainly for monumental masons. It was not really suitable for benchtop production. It was slow and inefficient but as the industry grew, CDK was able to source more suitable equipment, adding significant value to the stone industry.

Evolution and Development

The business changed when Jonathan spoke with CDK's founder Paul De Kok about the future. Jonathan advised Paul that in his opinion, the business could not remain → 16



competitive without a presence in more states. He was traveling extensively and felt the business was unsustainable without a change. Paul agreed and together, decided that Sydney was the place to start. If they could make it in Sydney, they could go anywhere. That's when they brought David Onesti on board and after a year on the road, asked him if he would head up an outlet in Sydney.

David agreed and so, in 1997 CDK started out in Sydney in a shared premises. Jonathan recalls flying up to help unload containers, working well into the evenings when they would often order in a pizza to end the day. Next came a move in 2000 to the current location in Melbourne, then Perth in 2004, Gold Coast in 2006 and finally, Adelaide in 2015. Today, the directors are James and Jonathan, David Onesti, Tony Victor, and Jarryd Parkes. CDK's products include premium natural stone, tools & equipment, stone care and stone working machinery and software.

With branches in five states of Australia and a partnership in New Zealand, CDK Stone has become the leader in the Australian Stone Industry with experience spanning four decades. Through strategic partnerships with European and American suppliers,

CDK Stone has the most comprehensive range of reliable tools and equipment in the country. They offer an unparalleled range of stone processing equipment from the most respected machinery manufacturers worldwide. CDK Stone is the leading national source of stone processing machinery servicing and maintenance in Australia.

A Focus on People

James and Jonathan speak highly, not only of their people and stewardship of the CDK 'family' but also of their commitment to the industry they serve. They speak of partnerships with their clients that go way beyond any products, equipment or consumables they can provide. Their real passion lies in the value they can provide to their customers, and the industry. James says, "As we have grown and developed, we've become more focused on improving the level of partnership we can give our customers. Service is a big part of that, but it's more about being there for them to help with advice and decisions, overcoming problems."

"We are in their corner, our customers are never isolated," James continues. "Their success is our success. Our mission is to develop our people, products and capabilities so that we are recognised as an essential





partner for our customers’ ongoing success.” Jonathan adds, “We need to be close to the international market, so we know what our customers need, what the smart ideas are. Relationships are built over decades and with 35 years of experience and personal contacts throughout the world’s stone supply chain, we find smart people in often the most unexpected places.”

“As we’ve catered for the changing stone industry needs, our company has evolved. We hardly do anything now that CDK did 40 years ago,” said James. Jonathan adds, “We owe our success to our people, their ability to change to meet the needs of the market and our customers, their passion to fulfil our customers ambitions and to help advance our industry.” In 2022, CDK’s diverse offerings cater to every aspect of the industry and have allowed CDK Stone to offer the best and most comprehensive service to their customers.

CDK Products

For 40 years, CDK Stone has sourced the most beautiful Natural Stone on the planet. Through extensive travels and maintaining unparalleled standards, CDK Stone has continued to source and provide unique Natural Stones that drive Australian design. Their superb range of Marble, Travertine, Limestone, Granite and other exotic stones

such as Quartzite, and Dolomite, showcase individuality and natural beauty.

CDK’s premium, world-class stone processing equipment includes Computer Numerical Control (CNC) bridge saws from GMM and Burkhardt Loeffler; Computer Numerical Control (CNC) Milling machines from Thibaut, Burkhardt, and Cobalm; edge processing and polishing machines from Comandulli, and Water-Jet Cutters from Techni Waterjet. CDK also offer a complete range of equipment such as Diarex mitre saws, laser templators, water filtration, lifting and handling equipment, consumables, racking, cutting and processing tools, hand tools, safety equipment, cleaners, epoxy’s, resins and software.

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The CDK Family

CDK Stone is a company that, like all others in the building industry, succeeds on the strength of its people and their relationships with their customers. James comments, “We look after our own people to ensure they achieve their aspirations in life. A good job, lifestyle, continuous personal improvement and a healthy future. We look after our own people by making sure our customers are successful. It makes for a strong, mutually beneficial, happy, learning relationship.” Jonathan added, “Our relationship with our customers is never just a transaction; it has to be enjoyable and beneficial for everyone.”

Jonathan and James are already looking at the next generation of the CDK ‘family’ and customers by making long term decisions and building on existing and new relationships. Jonathan said, “People want to know the business they are dealing with has a good culture, it’s very important to us that our customers recognise CDK Stone as an essential partner who is actively contributing to their ongoing success. We’ve been here for 40 years, and we look to the next 40. We look beyond ourselves, adding value not only to CDK Stone, but to our customers and the industry.” ■



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