

A model business for slab fabrication

After running a successful slab fabrication operation in Sacramento, CA, for nearly four years, the owners of US Granite decided to open a second shop in Reno, NV, to further expand its production capacity

by Jennifer Adams

Teamwork has proven the key to success for Mike and Kathy Simonelli of US Granite in Sacramento, CA. The husband and wife team, who first met as teenagers, launched their slab fabrication business in November 2002. After experiencing pleasing results for several years, the owners recently opened a second fabrication shop in Reno, NV, and they have plans to set up a third location in Los Banos, CA, by the spring of 2007.

"Mike started in tile at the age of 15 years old, and we met at the age of 17," said Kathy Simonelli, co-owner of US Granite. "At the age of 21 — after my persistent 'study classes' — Mike passed his C54 license and became a tile contractor. He began fabricating slabs in 1992."

Ten years later, the couple decided to form their own company. Since opening three and a half years ago, US Granite has expanded to a new facility about a year ago. "Our main focus was



The owners of US Granite in Sacramento, CA, launched their slab fabrication business in November 2002, which concentrates on the production of natural stone, quartz and Corian slabs. Among the machinery in its shop is a Sierra bridge saw from Park Industries.

custom homeowners, kitchen and bath dealers, etc.," explained Simonelli. "Due to [the need for] quality and on-time delivery, our main focus is now production builders, custom home contractors, retail flooring and design center outlets. We now have a good

market share of all segments of the slab fabrication industry."

Slab production

US Granite concentrates on the production of natural stone, quartz and Corian slabs. The company produces



The 22,000-square-foot facility in Sacramento is also equipped with a Park Pro Edge III automatic edge machine.



A Park Destiny dual-spindle CNC Stonecenter is also used in the slab fabrication process.



A waterjet from Flow International assists the company in producing approximately 250 kitchens a month at its Sacramento location.

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The 22,000-square-foot facility in Sacramento houses a range of state-of-the-art machinery from Park Industries, including a Pro Edge III automatic edge machine, two Sierra bridge saws, a Fastback flat edge polishing machine, a Velocity decorative edge shaper and polisher, and a Destiny dual-spindle CNC Stonecenter. Additionally, the fabrication shop is equipped with a water filtration system from Water Treatment Technologies and a waterjet from Flow International.

According to Simonelli, the Park Fastback was the most recent addition to the shop. “It has reduced our number of hand polisher employees and polishing pads,” she said. “[Also], it increased our speed in production of backsplashes.”

The Reno facility measures 22,000 square feet, and is equipped with the same machinery as the Sacramento location.

In total, the shop in Sacramento employs 40 workers. The company runs two shifts — one day and one night. In addition, it has 11 install crews.

While US Granite’s installation teams still use Luan plywood strips for templating, the company has also invested in digitizing equipment. “We can produce a piece without tear out, re-templating or downtime to the homeowner,” said Simonelli.

Marketing efforts

With a second fabrication operation in place, US Granite will be able to further concentrate its sales efforts on production and custom-home builders as well as carpet and flooring



Because of the success that US Granite has experienced with its Flow waterjet, it invested in a second machine for its recently opened operation in Reno, NV (top, left). Additionally, both fabrication shops are equipped with a water filtration system from Water Treatment Technologies (top, right).



outlets. Currently, a total of 70% of the company's business is natural stone, 20% quartz and 10% Corian, according to Simonelli.

US Granite has also fabricated products for several high-profile projects such as the Governor's Mansion in California for Arnold Schwarzenegger. When looking to the future, the company's owners hope to continue the path to success they are presently following. "Our goal is to stay consistent and produce quality without schedule compromise," said Simonelli. □

US Granite Sacramento, CA

Type of work: slab fabrication for production and custom-home builders as well as carpet and flooring outlets

Machinery: A Pro Edge III automatic edge machine, two Sierra bridge saws, a Fastback flat edge polishing machine, a Velocity decorative edge shaper and polisher, and a Destiny dual-spindle CNC Stonecenter — all from Park Industries; a water filtration system from Water Treatment Technologies; and a waterjet from Flow International (all equipment in both Sacramento, CA, and Reno, NV, locations)

Number of Employees: 40 (Sacramento, CA, location)

Production Rate: 250 kitchens per month (all materials)