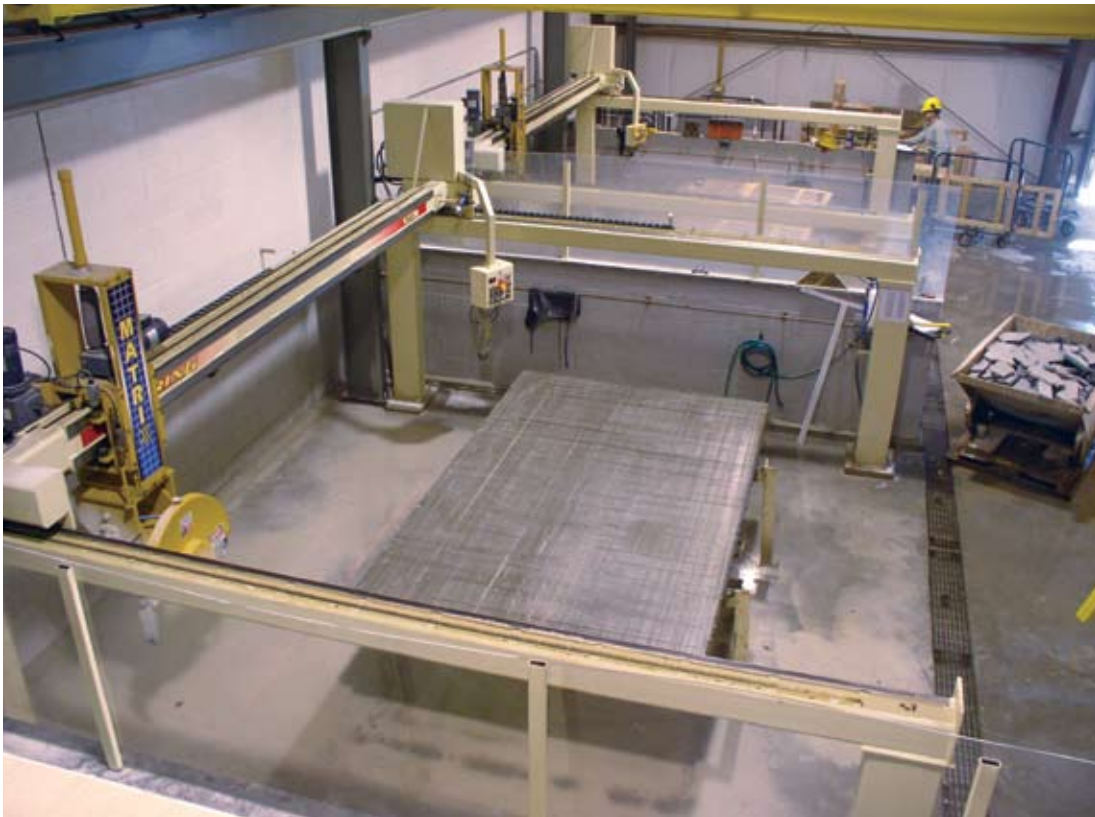


Focusing on quality and efficiency

Since its foundation four years ago, Discover Marble & Granite has developed two successful fabrication shops, which operate with an optimal level of organization

by Michael Reis

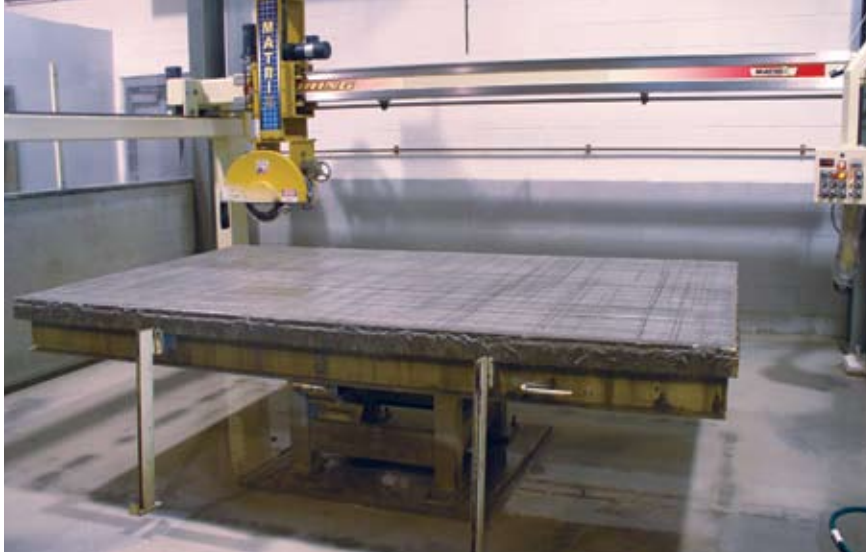


Discover Marble & Granite fabricates an average of 100 kitchens per week between its locations in Millbury, MA, and Ft. Meyers, FL. The company operates two Matrix bridge saws in Millbury and a third in Fort Meyers. A fourth Matrix saw is also on the way.

Originally trained as a commercial pilot, Victor DeOliveira was introduced to the stone industry by his brother-in-law five years ago. After attending the seminars at StonExpo 2001, he was encouraged to open his own

operation, and he founded Discover Marble & Granite with his wife Cristina, sister Laury, and brother-in-law Joao Contao in Millbury, MA. Today, the company now operates a second shop in Ft. Meyers, FL, and the two locations fabricate an average of

100 kitchens per week. And to ensure high-quality fabrication, Discover Marble & Granite not only operates advanced stoneworking machinery, but it has also carefully planned each expansion for optimum material flow and overall efficiency.



“Our stone cutting demands are huge,” said Victor DeOliveira, President and CEO of Discover Marble & Granite. “We run the Matrix Sebring saws virtually around the clock.”



The Massachusetts office/showroom/shop has 20,000 square feet of space, while the Ft. Meyers location has 12,000 square feet of space. DeOliveira carefully configured the shop -- and expansion -- so that the flow of the workpieces is as smooth as possible, and the company can easily locate any project at any time. There are separate rooms for sawing and edging/finishing, and material is maneuvered with a 1-ton overhead crane. Jobs are also transported and staged using carts from Braxton Bragg, and DeOliveira said the company has 50 carts in all.

In terms of equipment, Discover Marble & Granite operates two Matrix bridge saws in Millbury, and a third in Fort Meyers. A fourth Matrix saw is also on the way. In addition to the Matrix saws, the Millbury location operates a programmable Levi Tunisi bridge saw, which it purchased from International Machine Corp.

In the beginning, edges were processed with Marmoelettromeccanica Master 3500 portable routers, which were purchased from Regent Stone Products and are still in operation. The company is also investing in two Sasso Flying Flat automated edge polishers from U.S. Granite Machinery -- one for each location.

A Park Wizard radial arm polisher is being used for polishing sink cut-outs, and Discover Marble & Granite is also investing in CNC technology, as it has purchased three Intermac Master Stone units from AGM. The Millbury location is implementing two CNC units -- the Intermac Master Stone 43 and 33 models, while the Ft. Meyers branch is using the Intermac Master Stone 43 model.

The Millbury location operates a programmable Levi Tunisi bridge saw, which it purchased from International Machine Corp. of Holbrook, NY.



Prior to sawing, Luan plywood templates are laid out on the workpiece.



A Park Wizard radial arm polisher is being used for polishing sink cut-outs, and the unit is being moved from the Millbury location to the Ft. Meyers shop.



To maximize water efficiency, the shop uses the EnviroSystem water recycling system from Water Treatment Technologies of Hampton, NH.



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Having two locations offers the company some synergy in its equipment use. For example, with the two CNC machines in place in Millbury, Discover Marble & Granite can now move the Park Wizard to the Ft. Meyers location.

Tooling is purchased from GranQuartz and Braxton-Bragg. To maximize water efficiency, the shop uses the EnviroSystem water recycling system from Water Treatment Technologies.

Discover Marble & Granite fabricates approximately 70 kitchens per week in Millbury and another 30 in Florida. In all, the company has 85 employees - - 62 in Millbury and 23 in Ft. Meyers. New employees are generally hired by referral, and DeOliveira is generally based in the Millbury location — making two trips to Ft. Myers each month to supervise that operation.

DeOliveira stressed that that both operations place an emphasis on workplace safety, and he cited the Marble Institute of America (MIA) as a valuable source of information in this area. “The tools they give are invaluable,” he said. “Our in-house training is based on MIA [principles].”

The company’s sales are primarily wholesale, as well as through Lowes. Discover Marble & Granite services 120 kitchen dealers in Massachusetts and another 30 in Florida. With such a high volume of production, DeOliveira said that customer service is critical, and the company has a full-scale Quality Control Department in place in Millbury, tracking all orders for both locations. This department handles all customer issues and maintains a



The Millbury shop has separate rooms for sawing and edging/finishing, and material is maneuvered with a 1-ton overhead crane.



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The company is also investing in two Sasso Flying Flat automated edge polishers from U.S. Granite Machinery — one for each location.

database of all aspects of the operation. It has proven valuable in identifying problems and patterns, and has reduced call-backs and other issues. "We're not seeing repetitive problems," DeOliveira said. "That's when you know it is working." Central accounting is also located in Millbury, along with a full-time marketing director.

A native of Brazil, DeOliveira imports much of his material directly from locales such as India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia and Italy, and he also purchases material from area distributors such as Marble & Granite, Inc. of Westwood, MA. In the future, expansion for Discover Marble & Granite will include a third location in Orlando, FL. □

Discover Marble & Granite Millbury, MA, and Ft. Meyers, FL

Type of work: kitchen countertops in natural stone and quartz surfacing
Machinery: Four bridge saws from Matrix Stone Products of Rancho Cucamonga, CA; Levi Tunisi programmable bridge saw from International Machine Corp. of Holbrook, NY; Wizard radial arm polisher from Park Industries of St. Cloud, MN; EnviroSystem from Water Treatment Technologies of Hampton, NH; tooling and shop carts from Braxton-Bragg of Knoxville, TN; tooling from GranQuartz of Tucker, GA; two Intermac Master Stone 43 CNC stoneworking centers and one Intermac Master Stone 33 CNC stoneworking center, all from AGM of Pineville, NC; Sasso Flying Flat automated edge polishers from U.S. Granite Machinery of Barrington, IL; job tracking software from Moraware of San Mateo, CA

Number of Employees: 85 (62 in Millbury and 23 in Ft. Meyers)

Production Rate: 100 (70 in Millbury and 30 in Florida)