

RE-EMERGING U.S. STONE INDUSTRY

Working as an extended family

Counter Revolution of Passaic, NJ, has steadily grown as a countertop manufacturer, bolstered by a dedicated team of employees — many of whom have been with the company over the long haul

by Jennifer Adams



Photos by Michael Reis

Based in Passaic, NJ, Counter Revolution is a fabricator of Silestone quartz surfacing and natural stone countertops, among other material. The company supplies its products to 42 Home Depot and seven Loews locations within New Jersey.

The explosive growth experienced by Counter Revolution can be attributed to strong relationships between family and friends, dedication and hard work. As an authorized distributor/fabricator of Silestone® quartz surfaces, the company's facility in Passaic, NJ, has quadrupled

production over the last year. The company was founded as a custom laminate countertop shop that expanded into solid surface, but the recent introduction of Silestone has dramatically changed the face and focus of the operation.

Leonardo (Lenny) Ventimiglia and

Thomas Landers are childhood friends and partners that have successfully combined their different experiences and skill sets to create a perfectly balanced distribution of responsibilities. Ventimiglia has spent his entire professional career in the wood working industry. His early days were spent learning the fine art of



In the stone division, the fabricating shop is equipped with a Marmoelettromeccanica Dynamica bridge saw from Regent Stone Products.



When choosing a CNC machine, the owners of Counter Revolution selected one from Northwood Machine Manufacturing Co. "There are many advantages to buying American technology when it comes to maintenance," said co-owner Leonardo Ventimiglia, adding that the piece of machinery contains a 32-tool changer.

cabinet making while working along side his father in their family business. Natale Ventimiglia's father, immigrated from Sicily with his most valuable possession, the knowledge and artistry of old world cabinet making. Natale Ventimiglia continues to practice his art today while maintaining a shop at Counter Revolution.

Thomas Landers began his career as an operations manager for a wholesale cabinet supplier before breaking away and founding Counter Revolution in 1990. Although there were many years of conversation, it was not until 1998 that Landers and Ventimiglia decided to enter

into partnership. As president, Tom spends his energies on sales and operations. Meanwhile, Ventimiglia focuses on production and the supervision of the labor force. "Lenny and I are childhood friends," said Landers. "As kids, we grew up together playing on the same basketball teams. Even though we each had our own companies we often spoke about combining our efforts. It didn't happen overnight, but when the timing was right we took advantage of the opportunity."

While the family's pride in craftsmanship has been a staple in their

business approach, not all of the Ventimiglias followed the same career path. Leonardo's younger brother, John, worked briefly in the family business before becoming an actor and joining another famous family. The decision proved to be a wise one, as John has performed on many national television programs and currently plays the role of chef and restaurant owner Artie Bucco on HBO's hit series *The Sopranos*. (During *Stone World's* tour of Counter Revolution, the actor stopped by to visit with his family, and when asked about his participation in the trade, he jokingly recalled that his best talent was sweeping the floors.)

Making the move

In 2001, Counter Revolution moved from its facility in Clifton, NJ, to its current location in Passaic. "The move gave us expansion opportunities that would not have been possible in Clifton," said Ventimiglia. Their big break came in 2003, when they were awarded the exclusive Silestone distribution rights for North Jersey. Three months later — and an additional 15,000 square feet of space — Counter Revolution was in the stone business. The partners had been looking to expand their company's role, according to Ventimiglia. "I've wanted to get in the stone business for years," he said, adding that once the decision was made they moved on a fast track. "We had three months to set up shop and start producing." Within one year, the stone fabrication division at Counter Revolution grew from five workers to six, and then 18. "We've been very fortunate with the guys that we have," said Ventimiglia. "Many of our stone fabricators have come from our other divisions. When they move into the stone department, all we have to do is fine tune their skills." A total of 75% of Counter Revolution's employees are local



Three months after the CNC machine was installed, a Z-laser positioning system from Carter Products was installed above it to minimize errors in fabrication.



Water is recycled in the facility with a water treatment system manufactured by Water Treatment Technologies.



Among the machinery in the shop is also a Marmo Meccanica LCV 711M straight edge polisher.



The most recent addition to Counter Revolution's line of equipment is a Breton FRPC 700 numerically controlled saw.

residents from Passaic. "We find new employees mostly by networking with the local communities and utilizing the resources of the Passaic economic development committee," said Ventimiglia.

The fabricating shop for the stone division is equipped with a CNC machine from Northwood Machine Manufacturing Co. "I opted for

American when it came to the CNC," said Ventimiglia, adding that the piece of machinery contains a 32-tool changer. "There are many advantages to buying American technology when it comes to maintenance." He explained that three months after the CNC machine was installed, a Z-laser positioning system from Carter Products was installed to minimize the set up time and avoid

costly errors. Additionally, the shop contains a Marmoelettromeccanica Dinamica bridge saw from Regent Stone Products, a Marmo Meccanica LCV 711M straight edge polisher and a water treatment system from Water Treatment Technologies. The most recent addition to the company's line of equipment is a Breton FRPC 700 numerically controlled saw. "It's top of



"The company maintains a "template review/inspection department" to insure high-quality products. "We send our most experienced people into the customers home to create a template and review an extensive check list." Before any job is put into production the template is reviewed again and digitized so that the information can be sent to the programmer.



"That is quality control," said Ventimiglia. "Everything is checked and double checked. After it is inspected, it's signed and given a bin location number."

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Since opening its stone division last year, Counter Revolution has always run two shifts. Silestone comprises 90% of the production in this area, with close to 500 square feet being fabricated per day. Approximately 36 colors are kept in the company's inventory as well as many "fall-off" pieces. "Everything is tracked by color, size, tone number and

lot number," explained Ventimiglia. "Maintaining accurate inventory records is a key component to managing your cost."

Counter Revolution realizes the importance of quality control. "Price is very competitive today," said Ventimiglia. "But if your quality is sub-standard, it doesn't matter what you charge." The company maintains a "template review/inspection



With the goal of producing the highest level of quality, workers often use hand tools to finish the edges of the countertops.

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With six installation teams completing approximately 12 installs a day — 90% being Silestone countertops — administration staff maintains a charted schedule to stay organized.



Strong bonds between family and friends provide a strong core structure for Counter Revolution. (From left to right) Leonardo Ventimiglia, Natale Ventimiglia, Thomas Landers and John Ventimiglia. Although John Ventimiglia briefly worked with his family, he went on to become a nationally recognized actor and now plays the role of chef and restaurant owner Artie Bucco in HBO's hit series, *The Sopranos*.

The company also produces custom countertops for some of its own residential projects. Coincidentally, it was asked by a local builder to fabricate Silestone counters for a residence in Caldwell, NJ, which is filmed as the home of Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos*.

Marketing the product

In total, Counter Revolution has a staff of 85, including six installation teams. The company completes approximately 12 installs a day, with 90% being Silestone countertops. Their territory spans most of New Jersey and parts of New York and Pennsylvania, according to Ventimiglia. It supplies countertops for 42 Home Depot locations, seven Loews and many independent distributors and dealerships.

"Counter Revolution understands the importance of having a diverse customer base, and we have recently added new sales people to improve our services to the kitchen cabinet dealer,"

said Landers. "Additionally, we are developing a network of certified Silestone installers who buy fabricated goods from us." By coincidence, a local builder contracted with Counter Revolution to fabricate Silestone counters for a residence in Caldwell, NJ, which as it turns out, is the home of Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos*.

Efficiency is an essential ingredient in the success of Counter Revolution. "We are dedicated to meeting deadlines," said Ventimiglia. "Rain or shine, it better be done, and if not, there better be a very good reason."

Both owners credit Silestone with giving their company the opportunity to

grow. In particular, they are grateful to Glenn Kross of Cosentino U.S.A., who is the company's Northeast Regional Sales Manager. "The key to our success is not just to introduce automation to fabrication, but it is also important to have a smooth and efficient sales program, and Glen has been very helpful in guiding us through the process," said Landers. "We owe a lot to Silestone. They took a chance on an unproven company, and gave us an opportunity to show our value. We believe that the market for Silestone has limitless growth potential, and we will continue to raise the bar on our sales and standards." □

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