



**AARON CHAND,  
OWNER,  
PARADISE  
CABINETS**

- **We will continue to learn and expand by investing in automation. We will also pilot new ideas that may prove to fail, but also may be innovative and move the field forward.**
- **It's is a privilege to grow up in a woodworking family and continue to expand on what my parents created. I thoroughly enjoy being challenged on a daily basis. It has been a tough but rewarding journey; persistence and dedication are critical to success.**

# Opportunity knocked!

OCTOBER 2021

PROFESSIONALISM  
QUALITY  
INNOVATION



## What took 4 hours now takes 8 minutes!

Paradise Cabinets & Countertops began in 1974 when Uday Chand, a former school teacher from Fiji, moved his family to Vancouver, BC in search of opportunity.



Quickly rising from a floor sweeper in a cabinet shop to a top employee, Uday seized the entrepreneurial opportunity to be part of a team opening up a branch in Prince George, BC. Today, this family run business is operated by Aaron Chand, his son and Charlie Kidd that Aaron warmly refers to as "brother from another mother"! This 25,000 sq. ft. shop employs eleven employees that work on the founding principles: hard work, high quality, and precision. The company specializes in kitchens, countertops and closets and manufacturers cabinets for 72 full houses per year for both commercial and residential millwork. They work with builders, developers and private owner.

### Responsive and thankful

When Covid-19 hit, Paradise responded by writing safety protocols for staff, installers and clients.



Like other companies they faced a reduction in staff and the morale of employees was low due to stress and uncertainty. But then an opportunity came along that Aaron and Charlie couldn't resist— expansion!

**CKCA:** When did you decide to expand and why?

**Aaron:** We were starting to get restricted for space years ago with the growth of the business so we had our sights set on expanding and increasing production through automation for a while. We have always been interested in purchasing the building right beside us and the owners decided to sell it during the pandemic and graciously, privately offered it to us. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we were presented with an opportunity we couldn't turn down because there was only one foot of separation between us and the building next door. My whole family and so many friends put in countless hours to ensure that the new building and finishing department were up and running as soon as possible. I cannot express my gratitude enough to my brothers Elvin and Elwin who put in 16-hour days for months.

### A pandemic, an expansion and a new finishing line (water-based)

**CKCA:** What was the scope of the expansion?

**Aaron:** The new building is 10,000 sq. ft (total 25,000 sq ft. with both buildings) and houses our new finishing department. This includes the new 60 foot finish line, mixing room for paint and sanding.



**CKCA:** What challenges were presented?

**Aaron:** We switched to water-based paint, as it is more environmentally friendly and it is the highest of quality paint. We mix our own colours/finishes in-house. We are the only kitchen and counter top company in northern BC to be using these products. However, this was a challenge. Keeping up with the business while ensuring that the new finish line was up and running properly made for long hours. We have been faced with challenges due to supply chain issues as well as the increase costs in materials. However, we have remained busier than ever because private owners have turned

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# Lesson Learned...

to renovations instead of personal travel due to pandemic restrictions.

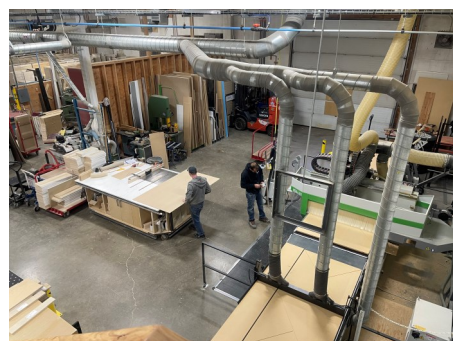
The expansion and new finish line, as well as supply chain issues delaying jobs, we didn't have as much time to ensure that staff morale was high and it was therefore hard to keep employees motivated to work. There were a few projects delayed due to supply chain issues, which put extra pressure and stress on the employees. CERB-cheques seemed to be a good alternative for employees who were stressed and very afraid of Covid-19. With the recent new hires, morale is now high because they are passionate about woodworking and eager to learn. They enjoy manufacturing the custom components of every project as it is exciting to build something new/different.

In addition, we didn't expect that it would take so long to ensure the new finish line was up and running. Calibrating the finish line to spray water-based paint was challenging. Having several employees leave was stressful, going through the hiring process and training new employees increased workload. We also had BC assessment change our business classification that hasn't been changed since 1974 and double our property taxes, which was unexpected as some of our competitors remained under the old classification and did not have a change in property tax.

## Employees can use the equipment for personal projects

**CKCA:** How are you keeping your employees engaged?

**Aaron:** We regularly have BBQ's or pizza lunches, as well as celebrate birthdays. We often give Christmas bonuses. We also support our workers in professional development



and offer benefits. Employees really appreciate using the shop as well as equipment after hours for their personal projects.

## From 4 hours to 8 minutes!

What used to take 4 hours to finish doors now takes 8 minutes. This has drastically increased production. Our crew is more excited now with the automation, as manually finishing doors was not a highly desired task. This leaves time for our crew to do work that they enjoy. Our crew is excited about the current expansion and future plans of growth because it gives them the opportunity to learn new equipment skills.



## A supportive family

**CKCA:** How much extra work did this expansion create for you?

**Aaron:** We worked 16 hour days, 7 days per week for 3-4 months. Since then, we work about 6 days per week and put in around 60 hours.

My brothers worked with me on the expansion day and night. My mom made sure we were fed and my dad organized and painted the shop. My girlfriend, Deb, helped with the loan application, made sure everyone was fed, and did general labour on the expansion. She also helped me keep my spirits up during challenging times. I am so grateful to all of them.

**CKCA:** How did you keep the business going while you were expanding?

**Aaron:** Having brothers work on the expansion during the day allowed me to work on the business during the day and join them to work on the expansion in the evenings. We do our best to ensure lean manufacturing, but our prices increased slightly due to the increase in materials.

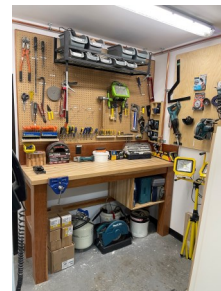
## Expansion Funding

**CKCA:** How did you fund the expansion?

**Aaron:** We applied for a loan from the bank and I had savings. While the loan went through fine, it was more difficult than usual to get the loan as so many businesses were closing early on in the pandemic.

**CKCA:** How do you feel your business is now positioned to face forward in the current market?

**Aaron:** Our business is stronger than ever with our eager team, our investment in automated equipment, and our lean manufacturing practices. We believe that there is always room for improvement, which is why we will continue to grow and expand. We are busier than ever with custom projects and we will also pilot new ideas that may prove to fail, but also may be innovative and move the field forward.



## Lessons Learned

**CKCA:** Any words of wisdom to share with others considering an expansion?

**Aaron:** Ensure you have a good support system of individuals willing to help. Keep extra funds available for unforeseen expenses. Be prepared for things to not go as planned and be open to change and different ideas. Consult with others who have done it before (this helped us so much in ensuring success). Be flexible and determined. Manage time between running a business and expansion.

I would like to thank artist Kathleen Stuart and her late husband Don Hjorth, P.Eng. For graciously donating their woodworking equipment to us during the pandemic. We are so appreciative to your generosity and hospitality. It's a privilege to grow up in a woodworking family and continue to expand what my parents created. I thoroughly enjoyed the challenge, it was tough, but a rewarding journey. Persistence and dedication are critical to success!

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