

PETER RAJA,
PRESIDENT,
NORELCO CABINETS



- **Overall what has enabled us to reach 50 years in the industry is our relationship and loyalty, the quality of the material and our customer service that has allowed us to stand the test of time.**
- **We really try and push Canadian and North American made products, as we want to support our local communities and environmental footprint.**
- **We are very proud of our product, customization and versatility of our production. There is no end to what we offer. Clients can request any finishings and we will accomplish it.**

On solid ground

FEBRUARY 2022

PROFESSIONALISM
QUALITY
INNOVATION



Build loyalty - Build with pride

Norelco Cabinets is celebrating 50 years of being a locally owned and operated cabinet manufacturer in Kelowna, BC. Peter Raja, Norelco's current Owner and President and two silent partners purchased Norelco in 2002.

Peter came from the construction industry and was a home builder. He had worked with Norelco on quite a few projects and built the home for the previous owner of Norelco. After forging a friendship, the opportunity to purchase Norelco came along and Peter thought it would be more stable to own a manufacturing plant rather than building house after house. After traveling a lot with house building, Peter now had an opportunity to stay home with his young family.

Founded in 1972 by Hans Norel the company was originally called Norson Cabinets as a start-up like so many companies in our industry. Norelco primarily focused on apartments and condos through the Okanagan, but they soon expanded to the lower mainland and even New Guinea and California. Peter says "It was prevalent from an early period that Norelco was meant to be international, as we currently produce and deliver cabinetry for high-end luxury projects throughout Western USA, including the Hawaiian Islands which we entered in 2010 due



NORELCO
C A B I N E T S

the recession to expand our business into other markets." Peter now spends a lot of time travelling back and forth to projects on the islands.

From a small family business to an international exporter with a 60,000 sq. ft. facility and over 150 employees, Norelco manufactures cabinetry for high-end luxury homes and meets the timelines for large-scale multi-family developments.



650 kitchens per year

Norelco operates with three different divisions: Local market, dealer network, and international export and produces about 650 kitchens per year.

Never repetitive

Peter admires the customization of the Norelco shop. "We get to work on a lot of unique projects, high-end custom homes—

anything from condos right through to the quarter one percent houses—multi-million-dollar homes. Designers create a vision that only a few companies in the world can do, and we are one of them. It is challenging, yet fun. Something new and exciting, and every day is new. Never repetitive."

Building on a foundation

When Peter and his partners bought the company they knew they wanted to carry on and build upon a solid foundation of what the previous owner had created. Peter says "We have built a lot of

long-term relationships with our client base who are very loyal to us. We have built the company off of those relationships, word of mouth and our customer service. We have

had employees that have been with us for 20-30 years. Within the sales and production teams. We have a lot of experience in the industry and not only are the clients loyal, but the loyalty and commitment from our team is what has built Norelco to the place it is today."

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A lot to be proud of...

Room for improvement

We asked Peter if he thinks there's room for improvement within his company and the industry overall. "With technology, automation, software, and new equipment that links from the design stage all the way to installation, there is always room for improvement. We all continue to evolve, especially with the labour shortages that we have been experiencing through COVID. More and more companies are leaning towards automation."

Weaving in sustainability

Norelco has pursued all North American made products, including domestic plywood made in Canada. All their export material in pro-core has soy-based adhesives which eliminates formaldehyde. Norelco uses UFA products, all paints are oil-based, and they buy products that are part of BUILD-Green British Columbia. Peter is proud that his company is able to reduce indoor air pollutants with the option of water-based finishes and through utilizing recycled wood products with no added urea formaldehyde.

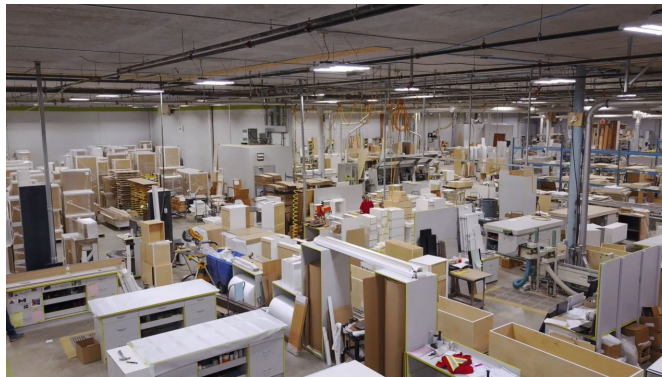
When asked if his dealer network is interested in these features Peter admits "There is a percentage of dealers that are very interested. The industry has a long way to go to promote environmentally friendly products, but unfortunately price is a factor in dealers deciding what types of environmentally friendly products in which they are willing to purchase. The product is still more expensive than the everyday line, which is hindering the growth of these friendly products."

Why is our industry attractive to work in?

Like most companies these days the struggle to find people to work in our sector is increasingly difficult. Companies are having to look at new and creative ways to attract talent as well as retain it. Peter has empowered his employees to have a voice which he believes strengthens his company's culture.

"We are proud that our people are our strength at Norelco. We are creating something that is the heart of a home. Everyone

lives and entertains in their kitchens and it's an area in the home you can be very proud of. When doing roofing, siding etc., you are not technically working in it every



day. What is the colour of their roofing? You live and breathe in your kitchen. Home builders are building these beautiful homes, and one of the areas that they are most proud of is the kitchen. Landscaping is another area, but outside of that it's the kitchen and it's the cabinetry that is the standout. "

Peter knows that if you want to get into the construction industry, you should join a trade that you can be proud to work in. "We are continually growing with the demand and are taking the living wage where our team can make a living. We continually build our staff, promote within and help build and create careers in the industry. The work is creative and fun and every day is different. At Norelco it's social and we try to create an uplifting and exciting workplace. There are lots of challenges that we have to deal with on a day-to-day basis, but we overcome and it's very rewarding when we do complete those challenges."

It's about a living wage for Canadians

Reflecting on the industry overall and whether the future is bright, Peter believes the market and industry have a bright future both in Canada and the US. But Peter is concerned about the impact of low-end imports. In fact, Peter is concerned enough that he is one of CKCA's volunteers currently sitting on

the Advocacy Committee to look at both the labour issue and ability for Canada to remain competitive with underpriced foreign imports entering the country every day.

"The country is allowing low-end imports in the market with a lot of different businesses. We are trying to create a different type of lifestyle where Canadians can have a living wage and make a decent living, and the Government wants the same thing for employees with the benefits that we offer. Unfortunately, other countries don't have to offer that, yet Canada allows all this product to come in

and undercut Canadian employees. The Government has to be able to protect what we want for Canadians, because so much is going to imports. At Norelco Cabinets, since mid to low-end products are coming in from overseas, we are focusing on high-end custom. We really try to push Canadian and North American made products, as we want to support our local communities and minimize our environmental footprint."



Why is Peter in the dark?

Peter walks the talk. When we hold Zoom meetings for the CKCA Advocacy Committee, Peter can be seen "in the dark". But that's because he's in Hawaii on a project and it's very early hours for him! He still carves out time to work with CKCA to move the dial on labour and competitiveness issues.

Build with pride

CKCA is fortunate to have Norelco as a member and we are very proud to have Peter as a committee member. By speaking up and talking about the challenges and finding the solutions, we can affect change so that companies like Norelco Cabinets can continue to do what they do best—build with pride.

CKCA says...

"Kitchen Cabinets—Proudly Built in Canada!"

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