

NO STONE UNTURNUED

Through product, pricing and new ways of helping homeowners plan their kitchen and bath renovations, Colonial Marble & Granite stands apart from the competition

by BILL DONAHUE | photography by NICK HOWARD

Most companies say they want to be different from their peers. Inevitably, however, most simply do their best to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers that led the way, hoping for similar successes.

Then there are companies such as Colonial Marble & Granite. The King of Prussia-based firm has been leading the field with innovative approaches to pricing, service and the ways in which it connects with customers since Angelo Bekas and Nikos Papadopoulos founded the business in 2007.

The large—and still growing—fabricator/installer of high-quality exotic stone has earned a reputation for being the Delaware Valley's foremost resource for kitchen, bath and other home-remodeling projects. Its 100,000-square-foot indoor showroom and production facility maintains an exhaustive inventory of more than 4,500 stone slabs—marble, granite, onyx, quartz, travertine, etc.—in more than 400 different colors. In addition to stone slabs, Colonial Marble & Granite has a sophisticated selection of tiles, most commonly used for kitchens and baths but also for outdoor flooring and fireplaces.

The showroom is more like a comprehensive design center than a typical home-remodeling showroom, according to senior vice president James Freeman. Here, customers can gain a realistic understanding of how a particular slab of stone, among other elements of their choosing, will look in their home once it has been installed. Colonial Marble & Granite has options to satisfy any customer's personal style—or, as Freeman says, “You're going to find what you're looking for when you come here.”

Colonial Marble & Granite has led the way with an all-inclusive pricing structure that some of its competitors have attempted to mimic. Previously, homeowners who worked with other fabricators often found themselves not knowing what the final price tag would be once the installation was complete. A long-running promotion whereby customers can purchase 50 square feet of granite countertop for as little as \$1,999 has been extremely popular. Now it's taking a similar all-in-one approach to the tile side of the business.

“Basically, we're looking for a way to reinvent how people buy tile,” he says. “We have hundreds of different options, with price points as low as \$99, to make it a simple process for the customer. In this area, the process has gotten more convoluted, so we were looking for a way to make it easy for people to buy their tile. People have known us for our countertops, so now they can come over here and know us for our tile, too.”

Not only do customers enjoy incredibly fair pricing and tremendous selection but, because of the company's growth and expansion, they also have more opportunities to take advantage of such benefits. In addition to its coming showroom expansion, the firm is adding more locations, with a new sales center in Harrisburg and new offices opening soon in Edison, N.J., and New Castle, Del.

Furthermore, Colonial Marble & Granite maintains several satellite locations in area malls—namely, The Court and Plaza at King of Prussia Mall; the Montgomery Mall in North Wales; the Oxford Valley Mall in Langhorne; the Lehigh Valley Mall in Allentown; and the Hamilton Mall in Mays Landing, N.J. Regardless of location, Colonial Marble & Granite has expert staff on hand to help homeowners plan their kitchen and bath renovations.

“As a company we invest heavily in our sales personnel,” he says. “I'd say we have the industry's best salespeople, bar none. They're trained repeatedly to help them fine tune their ability to help customers find exactly what they're looking for. When they're done with the sale and they call the customer back and ask for a referral, the customer wants to give it to them.”

Making Changes

Colonial Marble & Granite, which earned an A rating from the Better Business Bureau, has continued its tradition of playing a lead role in a sometimes crowded field. For example, the company's CNC (computer numerically controlled) technology enables its highly skilled tech-



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nicians to precisely craft a client's chosen slab, assuring customers of a perfect installation every time. “You're the customer,” Freeman says, “so you're going to get exactly what you want.”

For Colonial Marble & Granite, doing good business is about much more than providing high-quality products and expert service; it's also about being a good corporate citizen.

“We are always looking to give back and get involved, to support the communities in which we do business,” he says. “We want people to know that we're not just a company; we're engaged in the community. We're here for the long run.”

In the past year, for example, the company has helped build a home for an underprivileged family in partnership with the Flyers Wives, and also sponsored the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Furthermore, it remains committed to supporting local schools and community groups such as the Upper Merion Mother's Club (UMMC), a nonprofit that helps locally tied members of the military who have been stationed overseas. The company sponsors UMMC's Adopt a Soldier program by providing the postage required to send packages to soldiers abroad—“anywhere in the world,” Freeman says—containing everyday necessities and other essential items as a way to make them feel less isolated from the comforts of home.

Despite Colonial Marble & Granite's continued growth, it has managed to retain the small personal touches that have set it apart from the crowd since its inception. “We're still a family-run business,” Freeman says. “Whether it's the products and services we provide or the way we interact with our customers, we're continually looking to find new ways to make a good experience even better.”

Of course, the tradition of hosting cookouts for customers at its King of Prussia location every Saturday and on holidays continues to be a popular attraction, especially during football season. Freeman invites current and prospective customers to find Colonial Marble & Granite on Facebook and follow the company on Twitter, where customers can discover information about current projects, upcoming promotions and news of future events. “We want our customers to like us,” he says.

Based on its long-running success and pace of expansion, it seems that Colonial Marble & Granite has already accomplished that goal. ■

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