

energy efficient



A new migrant to Australia recognised an opportunity to build a business marketing roller shutters when he arrived in the country in the early 1980s. Dr Ibrahim Elassaad's vision led to the creation of CW Products in 1984.

DAWN ADAMS REPORTS

LONG BEFORE the term 'energy efficiency' became a focus for concern and debate, Dr Ibrahim Elassaad was paying attention. He arrived in Australia in the early 1980s without work and with little money or English language skills, according to his son Danny. But packed in his suitcase of possibilities was a PhD in solar engineering secured in France. It's clear that Danny, who is CW Products' marketing director, has great admiration for his father. He mentions his depth of knowledge many times in our conversation and credits his foresight with finding the opportunity that would enable the company to create strong foundations for growth in Australia. As part of his PhD, Dr Elassaad studied energy efficiency in the home and discovered the positive impact of rollers shutters for conserving energy. Danny points out that his father learnt this lesson against the backdrop of the extremes of weather found in Europe, where insulation is essential to guard against the cold weather more so than the heat of summer.

"When dad came to Australia, he had no job, not much language or money but he saw an opportunity to release something new onto the market that offered the benefits of managing temperature or climate control in the home as well as privacy and security," he says. "Roller shutters were versatile and could have quick market acceptance."

CW Products was established and began importing roller shutters from Heroal Germany. "Today, we still import these roller shutters as part of our range," he says. At the same time, the firm began importing Simu motorisation solutions from France. In 1998, Elassaad claims CW Products became one of only three companies in Australia to manufacture roller shutter slats. "From the late '90s, we have grown our market share in roller shutters," he says. "We are seen as a product specialist; our team know the product intimately and can come up with customised solutions." Those solutions have included producing options suitable for bushfire-prone settings or appropriate for specific architectural applications such as roofing requirements. And he points

to rigorous internal processes designed to ensure that the finished product is top quality, while service is also a key feature at the firm. "We strive to give a high level of service no matter who the customer is, whether large or small," he says.

Father-son synergy

WHEN DANNY joined the business in 2001, initially on a part-time basis, it quickly became apparent that he shared his father's passion for this industry sector, and a strong partnership between father and son developed. "We both had a commitment to take the business to the next level," he says. "There was a good synergy of old wisdom and experience and young passion and excitement."

Over time, a number of key initiatives were undertaken to take the business to the next level. The firm's manufacturing operation was relocated to Murray Bridge in South Australia into a 9500-square-metre production facility. "This is now the home of all our roller shutter manufacture, from full length wholesale product, roller shutter profile and slats to custom made-to-measure product," he says. Danny describes the facility as state-of-the-art, equipped with cutting-edge European technology and high





Dr Ibrahim + Danny Elassaad



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quality materials that are sourced internationally.

In recent years, the firm has been transitioning to a management style that is based on a culture of being part of a team. “We’ve been bringing the right people into the business from a sales and management point of view,” he says. He points to the contribution now being made by well known industry identity Kevin Sharp, who came out of retirement to help the firm restructure in areas such as its back end computerisation systems.

Innovation

“IN 2010, we launched two new roller shutter products: SolarSmart and FireSafe,” he says. Danny claims that the company has also been a pioneer in the solar roller shutter market in Australia from the early ‘90s, specialising in low voltage motorisation options such as the SolarSmart technology that was released in September last year. “SolarSmart allows for quick and easy installation,” he says. FireSafe is a range of bushfire rated roller shutters that comply with the new Australian Standard covering this area.

CW Products also continues to market Simu tubular motorisation products for blinds, awnings, roller shutters and projection screens. “Simu is an important part of our business; it’s a strong motorisation brand that is known for quality and technical invention,” he says. He also reminds that Simu invented the tubular motor in 1959 to satisfy a request from an aristocratic lady who sought a roller shutter solution for her French chateau. Another shift in strategy in recent times has been to begin promoting the business. “We had never marketed ourselves until around 18 months ago,” he says. “Based on our industry reputation, we would grow organically. People perceive us as a quality supplier and we have a great relationship with clients. There is never a problem too big to resolve and we have designed specific electronics, in certain cases, to help out.” He points to electrical engineers being enlisted on occasion, to assist in developing custom-made solutions. Danny names the firm’s key goals as including becoming known as the number one roller shutter manufacturer and wholesaler in Australia and being recognised for its solutions-oriented approach that

establishes it as a partner with customers. "We want to be perceived as the number one roller shutter supplier and a preferred motorisation supplier," he says. "We'll do that by ensuring our customers have the back-up support they need for the roller shutter and motorisation side," he says. "We will give them the marketing and communication tools they need to help them up-sell their customers to motorisation, as well as provide training and technical support."

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*Danny Elassaad,
CW Products*



better state market service

CW PRODUCTS has opened a facility in Sydney to better service and grow it's NSW businesses for their high quality range of roller shutter products and Simu motorisation solutions.

"We want to better service the market in the state," says marketing director Danny Elassaad. "We are also developing a training facility for installers and retail sales teams so we can answer their questions and help them up-sell to motorisation for roller shutters. We want to be able to give technical advice on the ground." The training facility is expected to begin operating around the middle of the year. "The Sydney facility is three quarters set up now," Danny

says. "It's only the showroom and the training facility that we're still working on. And while the majority of finished roller shutter product is made in Adelaide, we now have a small manufacturing facility in Sydney that will allow us to be flexible for emergency work and repairs," he says. "We'll put stock on the ground in our warehouse and will allow installers to pick up product directly from us if they choose. It's designed to give customers what they need when they need it, with back-up service and support." The company's products are sold throughout Australia from Tasmania to northern Queensland and throughout Western Australia,

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