

Log on to Kingpost Timberworks

The back of Joey Chalk's shirt says, 'We make what you can't find'.

'The kind of work I really love is when a client has a dream project but they think it is going to be too expensive and doubt anyone can make it. But I say that it's not going to be that expensive and I can probably make anything you want.'

Joey is a third-generation wood worker who began learning his skills, alongside his dad, from three years old. 'My first business, which I started when I was 13, was making skateboard decks.'

Joey was very keen on skateboarding and admits he could have gone as far as finding a sponsor but it wasn't really the direction in which he wanted to go. 'Working in film and TV was my dream. I auditioned as an actor and ended up doing some stunt work because I was really into skateboarding. I got paid for it but I just wondered if I was actually achieving anything.'

After discovering how unglamorous the media industry was, Joey joined his father's building business. 'It was an opportunity to earn a good wage and do something I enjoyed. I learned the skills I needed from him and started my own building business. I had four fulltime builders working for me and I suddenly became a manager which, really, was no fun.'

Soon after, Joey was diagnosed with bowel cancer and had to shut everything down and do chemotherapy for six months. 'I had to sell our house and move in with my parents-in-law. There was a good-sized workshop there so I played around making whatever I could when I felt well enough. By the end of that six months, I had a couple of jobs lined up for making some furniture. I'm actually so grateful I had that health scare because it made me ask myself what I really wanted to do with my time.'

In 2010, Joey began Kingpost Timberworks in Wellsford. His philosophy with Kingpost is to do work he loves, keep it small and concentrate on making enough to live and have some fun. 'I don't want to grow my business much beyond what I can do myself. A lot of people find that hard to understand but I just want enough money to buy food and enjoy my family. What I do is very niche but I really enjoy it and I don't want to lose that.'

As an extension of an add-on service that Joey provided – giving clients a video of him making their piece of furniture – he started a successful Youtube channel featuring his work. 'I've got over 100,000 subscribers now and it has become an income source for me.'

While the most common commissions are for some type of shelving, like book cases or entertainment units, Joey emphasises that he loves challenging work. 'The reason I get so many odd-ball jobs is because my approach is to say to everything, "Yeah, I can make it", and then I just have to work out how to do it. I get jobs because I have the creativity and skills to solve problems.'

As for the future, Joey keeps plans to a minimum. 'With the cancer diagnosis, I found one day I was healthy and the next day I was a cancer patient. It was a big thing and made me realise you have no clue what's going to happen tomorrow. So I don't make a heck of a lot of plans. I'm always just on the look out for the next interesting job.'

Youtube (KingPost TimberWorks) and kingpost.co.nz