



A DYNAMIC DUO

PUREFORM'S SUCCESS LIES BOTH IN ATTENTION TO
DETAIL, AND IN A SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

▶ *Photography:* STEPHEN GRAY

► Story: **MARETA MARRAPODI**

The Australian Government constantly encourages us to buy “Australian-made”, informing us that we must all do our bit to help the Australian economy. That’s all well and good, but when was the last time you actually saw a “Made in Australia” label on any recently purchased item? I struggle to find anything within my home that is manufactured locally besides one of my favourite foods Vegemite – which clearly displays the words “proudly made in Australia since 1923” on its packaging. Even my much-loved classic white Bonds tee shirt now faces the prospect of losing its Made in Australia tag.

Over the past decade Australia has seen a dramatic increase in imports from our Asian trading partners who are flooding the market with products that are not only lower in price but, generally speaking, also inferior in quality.

The news is not all doom and gloom for the Australian manufacturing industry. There are still a small number of companies that are refusing to succumb to the market forces that are steering the mass exodus of Australian manufacturers away from our shores.

Franco Crea and Spiro Themistocleous are two Adelaidians that have focused on designing and building upmarket, unique and distinctive contemporary furniture that is manufactured right here in South Australia.

Although Pureform designs and creates an exclusive range of stylish and avant-garde furniture, its core business is catered towards tailor-made residential and commercial design solutions that satisfy each customer’s unique requirements.

The merging of Franco and Spiro’s areas of expertise bring together a number of different design disciplines that work in harmony to enable them to create items that are not only tasteful, practical and functional, but that also demonstrate a strong awareness of their surroundings.

Although it’s still early days, much of the success that they have achieved so far has been attributed to four major factors – knowing their market, strong customer service, a hands-on involvement in the production process from the inception of the design to the finished product, and the superior quality of their goods.

In the initial stages of planning the business, Franco and Spiro identified a gap in South Australia for innovative, premium, modern furnishings, and so decided to create a luxury brand that would cater to a very niche and exclusive market. A market in which Asia posed no threat and in which European brands dominated only in the ready-made furniture sector.

Spiro’s knowledge and use of the latest SolidWorks software allows him to design pieces with a large range of scope while enabling him to create 3D photographic image representations

“There’s nothing more flattering than having a client put their complete and utter trust in you, to create such an important piece that will become a part of their home for many years to come”

Upon meeting this dynamic duo, it is evident that they are a team in the true sense of the word, bouncing off each other and finishing each other’s sentences. There’s no denying the strong synergy between them.

With a background in industrial design, Spiro met Franco, who studied architecture and furniture design, while working for the same Adelaide-based firm. Frustrated with the direction in which the company was heading, they eventually decided to leave the business and start their own brand, calling it Pureform Furniture.

“As employees we were initially given total creative autonomy but as time went on, the whole Chinese invasion started to dictate sales and the ethos became all about volume and selling,” says Franco. “It was all about moving stuff and we weren’t happy to be just sales assistants.”

With a business and marketing plan in hand they secured funding from the bank for their new venture.

Already known within the architectural and design industry, they were able to source their first clients before the refurbishment of their new premises was complete. They both recall it being a crazy time where they worked day and night simultaneously fitting out their showroom and working on new projects. Weary and exhausted, it was only the excitement and adrenaline that gave them the energy to get through those initial long, gruelling and intense days.

of specified products, assisting the client through a virtual showroom experience.

In order to attain the best results possible, Franco and Spiro have implemented a personalised approach when dealing with clients, often leading to relationships that continue long after project completion. As they put it, they like to get into their client’s ‘headspace’ to not only create items that are aesthetically pleasing but that are also a reflection of their personality, lifestyle and surrounding environment.

“There’s nothing more flattering than having a client put their complete and utter trust in you to create such an important piece that will become a part of their home for many years to come,” says Franco. Involving the client also gives them a sense that they are contributing to the whole process, giving them a greater sense of satisfaction.

Although Pureform caters to a domestic market, commercial projects make up a large volume of its incoming business. The boys often collaborate with architects, builders, project managers, business owners and the prime decision-makers involved in the fit-out of buildings and offices.

Although Pureform’s prices are not for the faint of heart, they are a direct reflection of the quality of its products. Given that Franco and Spiro are involved in every aspect of the production process from start to finish they are able to ensure that the quality of their products will not be compromised.

Each piece is manufactured using the finest materials available with an impressive attention to detail. As Spiro says: "There is no point having a beautiful design that is made poorly". Working with materials such as laminates, stainless steel, Italian veneer, acrylic resin and plywood, Pureform products are made by quality craftsmen, masters of this dying art, who are now few and far between. All technology used in the manufacturing process is sourced from Italy and Germany, world leaders in the furniture machinery sector.

With a great appreciation of style and excellence, Spiro and Franco decided to add a range of chairs and stools to their collections in order to complement their artistic, simple, clean, and funky furniture pieces, stocking modern, unique and premium-level products from some of Europe's leading design firms. Why not simply produce these items themselves? Franco explains: "Designing chairs is a long and arduous process because of the amount of work involved in researching ergonomics and posture. We would like to eventually add these items to our line but at the moment we would like to concentrate on what we have now; we would like to take it one step at a time. We would also like to concentrate on product sustainability."

When Spiro Themistocleous and Franco Crea established Pureform Furniture a little over three years ago they never doubted it would be successful. Not only did they trust in their abilities and good business sense, they instinctively knew that their products would appeal to an exclusive niche market. The secret to their success? Well it's a combination of many things: "Know your market, do your research, have a strategic business plan, stay consistent, be true to yourself and your beliefs, give the best customer service possible and most of all make sure that you have an abundance of passion for what you do as your passion will drive you to do things that you never thought possible". Clearly a winning formula for any business.

