How one green company is changing lives while building furniture

When Tameron Haralambous asked her husband Peter to build a changing table for their nursery, she had no idea it would set them on the path to becoming award-winning furniture designers.



“We were trying to save money by making the table ourselves, but soon friends and family started asking if we could make a few more pieces for them,” says Tameron. “We got the idea to start posting some pieces on Gumtree, and the rest is history.”

While neither Tameron (a precision driver in the movie industry) and Peter (who worked in textile sales) had experience as furniture makers, they soon learned the ropes. “We found out that a shocking amount of good, usable wood gets thrown out as off-cuts and we started picking it up to make our furniture and décor pieces. Nowadays, it’s much harder to come by, but we’re still committed to use every scrap of wood.”

Commitment to people and environment

Initially the couple sold their wares out of the garage, then graduated to a container and a warehouse. Today Eco Furniture Design operates out of two warehouses and employs over 30 staff members, making custom furniture for homes and offices. Staying true to their “green” nature, Tameron also launched African Design and Décor, a company that uses off-cuts to produce colourful decorations and furniture.

“We’re committed to the environment and to upskilling. We’ve employed four interns and are doing skills development through a company called AVA (Action Volunteers Africa), Learn to Earn and TZN placements.” Dozens of unskilled workers, some literally taken off the streets, have gotten on their feet and become more employable as a result. “It’s important to us to pass on our knowledge and to help fellow South Africans get on their feet.”

Eco Furniture Design has won the Department of Trade and Industry Certificate of Achievement, NBSC Top 20 Award, NBSC National Skills Development Award and the National Gazelles Top 40 Award and regularly displays their goods at design exhibitions.

“We are still advertising on Gumtree though,” says Tameron.

She believes that persistence is the key to success for small businesses. “We literally come a long way from the garage to here, and if we can do it, anyone can.”

Eco Furniture Designs’ furniture can be bought online.

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