

# Your career

## New horizons are calling

By Gill South

**R**ECRUITMENT COMPANIES get very busy at this time year, as a result of people taking long walks on the beach and pondering their future.

"Do I really want to go back to Bob, Kath and Irene in accounts?" they ask themselves.

Kathryn Cross, senior consultant at recruitment company Momentum, says many people take time at Christmas to review their careers.

"In recruitment we see a lot of movement, and a lot of people come in for career guidance," she says.

"You spend 40 hours or more a week at work, so it's important to do something that you genuinely feel you enjoy," she says.

Cross has seen two people in the last week seeking career guidance.

"Both of them are very talented and highly skilled, but just not in the right place for them, and they are ready to make a change," says Cross.

"I guess both of them have been ready for some time. I think it's true that often people don't make a move until they are truly unhappy.

"Sometimes it can be a cultural

change that they need, rather than a change of career," she says.

People should listen to their gut feelings, because it can lead to much greater success.

Robert Hood, the man who founded furniture company, Ashton Grove, is a good example of this.

He was a trained joiner/carpenter and working as a builder when he set his company up 16 years ago.

What annoyed Hood about his job as a builder was the fact that he never got to see any task through.

He would put up a wall, and then someone else would come in and paint, gib and paper it.

"With furniture-making, you can start it and take it right to the end. You don't have someone else putting hinges on it," he says.

He had been making furniture on the side and set up the business full-time at the age of 23, doing a few pieces at a time and selling them in flea markets in Marlborough. Now he has four shops, in Christchurch, Auckland, Wellington and Melbourne. He hopes to have one in Sydney at some stage and is considering selling the company franchise further afield.

He has no regrets about leaving the

building industry. "I was really interested in the design aspect of furniture. I was more into crafting than just knocking up buildings."

"Making furniture started out as a hobby business, making a piece at a time," says Hood, now 39.

His desire to have full control, which set him down the path of starting his own business, led him to open his own shops.

"Shops are constantly trying to knock you back in price. I felt that I wanted to be my own master in the field."

Expanding the company has never been easy, as perfectionist Hood has been forced to entrust others to maintain his high standards.

"You have got to be there 24/7 watching the production, and also we have the attitude that we are never good enough. We are always striving for perfection," says Hood, who works in the Christchurch factory most days, although supervising rather than doing the job himself.

"Rather than ornate and spray finished, we go for simplicity. That's what the market tends to want, not pretentious furniture," says the designer who works in French oak, Italian oak,



**SUCCESS STORY:** Robert Hood, right, and the furniture he designs, above.

cherrywood, walnut and elm.

Because he is doing what he wants, he is more driven than he ever was as a builder.

"I have a lot of energy, and with that we are all about growth at this stage and capacity. We have got to get the factory cranking."

