



# RECESSION, PANDEMIC, NO WORRIES

Electrician Nathan Strachan of Rapid Wire doesn't let calamitous worldwide issues phase him. He started his business in August 2007, right at the start of the Global Financial Crisis, and in February this year he moved his growing business out of home and into new premises on Molesworth Street.

WORDS Will Johnston PHOTO Roger Richardson

It was a move he and wife Vicki started thinking about during lockdown. Their family was also growing and they felt it was time to get some separation between work and home.

The move to professional premises has also allowed more space for the staff to work in and gear to be stored as well as being easier for customers to call into.

The new premises weren't the only changes inspired by lockdown.

"Having that time off, we all realised we wanted to have more time with our families," Nath says. So he and the staff trialled a system where they worked nine hour days and had every second Friday off. It was so well received by staff and families that the new arrangement has been kept. Nathan reckons that that spirit of trying new things and looking for better ways to work has led to not only happy customers, but happy workers too. Most of his team have been with Nathan for a long time – he currently has four tradesmen, including himself, and three apprentices. One of this apprentices is likely to be qualified by the time this issue of LIVE is published, and another one will be done by the end of this year.

"I make a point of hiring an apprentice every year," says Nath. Two of his fully qualified electricians started with Rapid Wire as apprentices – one in 2010 and one in 2012. Rapid Wire also has an electrical inspector and office administrator. One thing that sets his business apart from other electricians, Nath reckons, is that they are super tidy. "If someone pays a tradesman they want a quality job."

He remembers a builder ringing up and commenting that the site was left in better condition than when Rapid Wire started the job.

"Our guys have pride in their work and appreciate that we don't rush them. They get stuck in and get the job done, and make sure they do it right."

Though work and family life now have some separation, Rapid Wire remains a family business – even Nathan and Vicki's two daughters chip in around the office.

"One does a couple of hours cleaning and the other one does a bit of data entry for an hour a day."

Specialising in electrical work from maintenance to new home builds, Rapid Wire's biggest client is Landmark Homes.

Installing solar is an increasing part of what Rapid Wire offers and the company is an installer for the popular Solar City brand. Rapid Wire is also part of the New Plymouth District Council's ventilation and solar scheme. Metering maintenance and relocations for Nova Energy is another aspect of electrical work Rapid Wire undertakes. Audio installation was something the company fell into by accident.

"I was asked by my wife's uncle to install a Bose system for him when the guy that was going to install it didn't turn up," Nath recalls.

He did such a good job that the retail company, where the audio equipment was bought from, asked Strachan if he could install all its audio.

"We went away and did further training specifically on installing audio equipment and we continue to upskill as technology develops. We mount TVs and hook up stereo systems as a regular part of our daily work now – especially for existing clients and for new houses."

Strachan said the business thrives off smaller jobs too.

"We can install a new light fitting in the afternoon rather than start a big job then," he reckons. Rapid Wire has not only survived the first year of COVID intact with no reductions in staff or pay rates, but they have plenty of work on too.

"The business is thriving and we'd love another tradesperson to come and join our team. We want someone who's a good worker, takes pride in what they do, and wants every second Friday off."



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