



SPEAKERS

Drew Blackman, Clayton Blackman, Danny Elassaad

Drew Blackman 00:00

The KRGS Doors show proudly brought to you by KRGS Doors for all your shopfront Roller Shutters, roller grilles, folding closures and bifold doors, visit www.KRGSdoors.com.au Welcome to the KRGS podcast. I'm your host Drew Blackman. The aim of our podcast is to talk to cool people with cool stories, whether it be our suppliers, customers, staff, other business owners, or people from different walks of life and get to know them a bit better. If you're interested in coming on, drop us a line or email or connect with us on Facebook and we can have a chat to see what we can do. Today I'm joined by KRGS Doors Managing Director Clayton Blackman and our guests on the podcast is Danny Elassaad Director from CW Products. CW Products is Australia's leading manufacturer of high quality Roller Shutters products and supply KRGS Doors with the motors to suit our Aluminium Roller Shutters and Grilles. CW Products was established in 1984 by Dr. Ibrahim Ellassad, a specialist solar engineer. His vision was to offer the best and unique motorisation and Roller Shutters solutions for the Australian market. Today some 35 years later, CW Products have grown from a small family business to having distribution branches Australia wide with its head office in Adelaide and state of the art manufacturing plant in Murray Bridge, South Australia. CW Products also supply some of the world's best automation products and solutions for awnings, blinds, Roller Shutters, home cinema projection screens and TV lifts. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome Mr. Danny Elassaad thank you for coming along and joining us on the KRGS Doors podcast Danny

Danny Elassaad 01:44

Thanks for having me, guys. It's good to be here.

Clayton Blackman 01:47

Good to see you.

Danny Elassaad 01:47

Yeah.

Drew Blackman 01:48

How long have you been going mate?

Danny Elassaad 01:50

Really? Well, really? Well. 2020 time is flying. But you know, the years kicked off with a bang already. So we're really excited for the year ahead.

Drew Blackman 02:00

That's excellent. Mate. As I mentioned, you're the director of CW Products. What is the Danny Elassaad story?

Danny Elassaad 02:07

Oh, wow, the Danny Elassaad story. Look, I was fortunate enough to be born in Sydney in 1984. Born to some Palestinian refugees, who really had a tough start to life, growing up in refugee camps in the Middle East. The vision was to raise their family somewhere a bit more safer and a bit more stable. And the family worked really hard, the parents, in particular, to give us a kickstart in life. And that's exactly what they did. So they ended up immigrating to France for seven years, from their dad did a PhD in solar engineering or a family business, became world class or what he does, and ended up moving the family to Australia in 1984. That was the year I was born. And same year, we started off CW products as well.

Clayton Blackman 03:02

And where they originate my way just started at?

Danny Elassaad 03:05

Australia. Yeah, so we started in Sydney. So dad, being an engineer came here with no language, no money, an older brother, my older brother to feed at the time and a baby on the way just a vision. Just a vision thought. I've got to provide for my family. And so he thought, well, what am I good at? I'm an engineer. I'm specialised in production lines. Yeah, things like that. And how do I get a start? So he thought, well, I'll go to these auctions and buy all bits of machinery and fix it up, sell it, I'll go into companies and help them improve some of their production processes. And that's where it started. So I was actually CW Project at the time, which stands for Collective Works Project. So he didn't really know what he wants to do at the time. Yeah, I thought I need to make a start. And that's what he did.

Drew Blackman 03:49

So 1984 was obviously a big year for him, as you mentioned, coming to Australia, baby on the way starting a business as a huge year in 1984. For him,

Danny Elassaad 04:00

yeah, I mean, it took some real guts to, to battle through that. I mean, you know, coming here, really on the back foot, and trying to make make something yourself a

Clayton Blackman 04:11

new country, not knowing the language

Danny Elassaad 04:13

Its tough, tough, massive effort. Yeah. I'm just thinking about starting a business now and how difficult that and you know, really had the the odds stacked against him. So yeah, we're incredibly proud of that story.

Clayton Blackman 04:24

Yeah. It's a fantastic story. And knowing a man he's he's very determined. Yes, gentlemen. Absolutely. And he's done a fantastic job, not only with his family, but to create the business that he's got.

Danny Elassaad 04:37

Yeah, thank you.

Drew Blackman 04:38

So dad's still involved in the business now.

Danny Elassaad 04:40

Yeah, Dad's very much still involved. So I call him the wisdom and we're very much a family affair much like you guys.

Clayton Blackman 04:51

Next time. he rings the wisdom.

Danny Elassaad 04:55

No, look, yeah, he's still very much involved. He's not not so much involved in day to day things anymore. He's really slowing down and just focusing on where he can add the greatest value. And that's really on the R&D side, in particular, so he's got a very passion, or he'll he loves it. He's always tinkering with new ideas. And it's really exciting, actually. Yeah. R&D programme is looking really good at the moment.

Drew Blackman 05:20

He started repairing machines, and then selling them on and then all of a sudden, how did he get into the motor side of things? And as I mentioned in the the preview, that motorised awnings, blinds Roller Shutters, how did that come about?

Danny Elassaad 05:36

Yeah, so what happened was when he was studying in France, and did his PhD in mechanical and solar engineering, he was involved in a research group at a university where they were looking at, essentially how to maximise the energy efficiency in the home. At the time, they already knew, in the late 70s, the I guess, the normal fossil fuels that were using going to dry, were going to dry up at some point, and that that was going to have a massive impact on climate, and that we needed to really start thinking about designing buildings better to be more energy efficient. So he was quite involved in a lot

of those studies and programmes at the time. And in the process, they worked out that, you know, a huge amount of energy loss within a building is actually through the windows. And so you know,

Clayton Blackman 06:23

how to leave those European countries with the with the temperature, absolute trying to keep the warmth in

Danny Elassaad 06:29

absolutely. out all the heat out. Yeah. So that's at that point, he came across Roller Shutters and thought a great product, you know, they keep the home, cooler in summer, warmer in winter, they block out light, all those sorts of things. There's a lot of advantages to them. And, you know, when he did start off CW projects at the time, in 84, he didn't walk around and realise that the window furnishings industry in Australia really wasn't that advanced, that there weren't really many ways to protect your windows. And he walked around. And in his words, he saw a lot of naked windows and saw the opportunity to create better, better insulation for the home better energy efficiency, but also a level of protection for the consumer. Crime started to become a thing. Yes, especially in Sydney in the in the late 70s. And he saw that opportunity, and that that's really where it started. So he said, Well, look, we want to get into the Roller Shutters space. But you know, Roller Shutters can be big, they can be heavy, how do we drive them how we motorise them, and started doing some research at the time and came across some, you know, our main motorisation control supplier out of France Cemur, which KRG's Doors, use this solution just in some of your some of your doors today. And that's really where it started.

Drew Blackman 07:44

So how did you become involved in the business?

Danny Elassaad 07:48

So I was dad's shadow growing up. So we're best mates. And ever since I was probably about six or seven on following around everywhere, and was really fortunate to every school holidays, be by his side working. And I didn't really know what he was doing at the time. But I think I was being exposed consciously or unconsciously to the business. And I just learned to love it. So whether it was from sweeping the floor to soldering some switches, or going out with dad to see the accountant or our customers, I've just learned to love the business

Clayton Blackman 08:22

learnt it from the ground up.

Danny Elassaad 08:23

Absolutely, yeah. And so, you know, as time got on, I decided at that point, it had been about 20 years of work already done in getting CW Products to where it was that, you know, what an honour to continue that legacy. And that's what I've been doing ever since.

Clayton Blackman 08:40

So your your role now is the director, did you have different roles throughout the company?

Danny Elassaad 08:45

Yeah, look, in the early years, you know, I was working in production, was working to, I guess, evolve the business, technologically. So you know, we started off with very basic IT systems. You know, we started off on one assembly bench in the manufacturing process and really worked without a formal title for a long time work to really, I guess, evolve those parts of the business. At the same time, I probably took on the marketing and sales hat as well for a long period of time, and sort of evolved and happy to say from start this year took over as MD so it's pretty exciting.

Clayton Blackman 09:22

Well done. Thank How old are you now?

Danny Elassaad 09:24

I'm 35.

Clayton Blackman 09:25

Okay, that's fantastic. Yeah.

Drew Blackman 09:27

So then you can vision is to obviously be there for a long time and then handed down to the next generation. Yeah,

Danny Elassaad 09:33

I'd very much love for for the next generation to, to continue on the legacy. As long as that's what they want it. I'm very mindful that you have to have a real deep love and respect for the business. Yes.

Clayton Blackman 09:46

Right. You got to be passionate. Yeah. And then try and pass that passion onto others around you. Absolutely. That's the hardest thing.

Danny Elassaad 09:52

Yeah. And, you know, I don't want them to be I don't want it to be something that they just expect. They've really Got that

Drew Blackman 10:01

right work for you similar to what you did starting? Absolutely the bottom and working your way up. Yeah, absolutely. That makes sense. So CW product Australia wide, how many staff members?

Danny Elassaad 10:12

We're a team of, I think just under 60 within our group. So we've got operations in Sydney and Melbourne and distributors, everywhere else in the country. But yeah, we've grown from that, I think 30 or 35 people five years ago to about 60. Now,

Clayton Blackman 10:26

so between you, you've got a Sydney branch, you got a Melbourne branch, and you've got your obviously Murray bridge. And that's the makeup the 60 people.

Danny Elassaad 10:34

Yeah, correct.

Drew Blackman 10:35

Clayton just mentioned Murray Bridge, what's the reasoning behind being based in Australia? Most businesses, a sort of Sydney, Melbourne, Australia wide business, that's where their head offices are. What's the distribution from Murray Bridge? What's the reasoning behind Adelaide?

Danny Elassaad 10:53

So the reasoning behind Adelaide was essentially went from being a beautiful city. Oh, look, it's great city, good lifestyle. Great wine

Drew Blackman 11:00

is good wine.

Danny Elassaad 11:02

I like to wine

Clayton Blackman 11:03

nice reds.

Danny Elassaad 11:04

Look, when Mum and Dad came to Australia in 84, that became really good family friends with another family with Palestinian heritage. And they collectively decided to move to Adelaide because it was a more affordable city, it was perceived to be a little bit safer at the time and more of a Mediterranean climate. So dad jokes that you know, he could grow his olive trees. So that's essentially why we ended up in Adelaide. And that's why CW Products became based out of Adelaide. But the reason why Adelaide because there's better all although a better olives, in terms of why Murray Bridge, probably about eight years ago, will based on Port Road in Alberta. And in Adelaide, we had a factor of about two and a half thousand square metres. And it was a bit of a rabbit warren well and truly outgrew it operating day to day became very challenging, and it became a real bottleneck to our ability to grow. And so what we said was, well, you know, where do we want to take this business in the next 20 years? And what kind of infrastructure do we need to be investing in, in order to allow us to get there in the next 20 years to do that in the next 20 years? So we thought about I thought, well, you know, we really, for the industry that we're in, we deal with big, bulky products, dealing with a lot of stillages, a lot of forklift movement. Yeah, all those sort of things. We need a lot of space, you know, some of our rollforming lines that, you know, 6070 metres long. And so we said, well, you know, let's have a look around and start looking at factories. And we didn't really find anything in Adelaide that met our needs for the price point that we were prepared to invest in. So over a cup of tea, I sort of turn around to dad and said, Well, what do we think about maybe moving regional, if we find the right infrastructure, and that was a bit of a lightbulb moment, literally, about two weeks later, we signed the deal on our Murray

Bridge site, which is about that's a 20,000 metre block of land 10 and a half thousand square metres of factory space. It's just state of the art building, but built by James Hardee's in the late 80s. For the for the investment, it was an absolute bargain. So we thought, You know what, Murray Bridge is the place the place to be?

Advertising 13:05

Yeah. So you mentioned your brother, is he in the business as well?

Drew Blackman 13:11

My brother does assist us. So he comes with from a law background and does assist us from time to time things in the business, but he's not involved so much day to day. Yeah. Now on you mentioned you've taken over as MD recently. What do you look for in an employee

Danny Elssaad 13:28

attitude, attitude over skills any day, the way, you know, if you come with the right attitude, we can give you the skills, but if you come with the skills and the wrong attitude, five minutes, it's a disaster and attitude. But you know, they look for people that are motivated people that actually, you know, one thing that's really dawned on me recently, is if you don't care, or love our customer as much as we do, this is probably not the right place for you.

Drew Blackman 13:55

That's the passion that we talk about. 100% Yeah, yeah, trying to install that passion of your business. Yeah. into your employees. That's the DNA. Absolutely. You know, that's what got us here.

Clayton Blackman 14:03

Absolutely. Having that same sort of passion. Yeah. For your customer. Absolutely. That's the hardest thing installing that. Yeah.

Drew Blackman 14:13

It does come in, I don't know whether it's a generational thing as well. It's not something that can be taught either. I think they've got to bring some of it with them. Absolutely. To want to be that customer focused.

Danny Elssaad 14:25

Absolutely. I mean, look, I say to everyone, it's our customers that pay the wages, you know, and we've got dad and I've got a saying and that is in our business. It's all about relationships. Correct. You know, it is about when you guys have an issue, we've got to know that were there with your shoulders

Clayton Blackman 14:43

were the same with our our suppliers like you guys know, you have an issue. You're just straight on the front foot and then we're it's the relationship that we have between our customers and shop fitters and builders, you know, no, it's just a knock on effect.

Danny Elssaad 14:56

Absolutely. I mean, we care about your customer. Exactly right. We want them to have good experience, we want to make sure that the operator that we're selling you guys that you're providing to them is going to perform to their needs because we want the next time. Absolutely. So you know, dad, and I've got to say, and that is leave a good taste in the customer's mouth. Yeah, they come back for another bite.

Advertising 15:16

Hey guys, sorry to interrupt the podcast, we have a word from our sponsor. KRGS Doors has recently released a new product. The Crystal Clear High Security grille manufactured from solid polycarbonate rod and polycarbonate links. The crystal clear high security grille offers visibility, airflow and security. For more information, visit www.KRGSdoors.com.au/products. Now back to the podcast

Clayton Blackman 15:39

in you mentioned 35, you're not that old? If you could speak to your younger self, who was just starting out? What advice would you give a couple

Danny Elassaad 15:48

a couple of things, I think I'd probably spend a year or two going overseas. And working in similar industries overseas and trying to understand first of all, start from the ground up in an operation, say in Europe or the US and just broaden my horizons in terms of understanding what else is out there within our industry, try to take that best practice and bring it back to our own business. So that's one thing. But the other thing is, find good people and invest in, you know, surround yourself with really, really good people as soon as you can. Because that will always pay off in spades. And the third thing would be Be patient, have the vision. Be clear on what that vision is. But be patient just, you know, every great journey starts with the first step, you know, step by step. Good point.

Clayton Blackman 16:35

Very good point on that with the travel, do you get an opportunity to go to Europe and the US to other businesses that are similar to yours now as a research trip are such?

Danny Elassaad 16:46

Yeah, I do. So I mean, we're really fortunate that we've got great partners around the world, great suppliers, great peers in the industry. And fortunately, our business is really well respected. So when we do go overseas, we are really well received. But I do try to make a point every year of going out there and taking the blinkers off and trying to understand what are the trends overseas? How the best in the world doing it?

Clayton Blackman 17:10

Well, that's where a lot of our ideas come from. Absolutely. Even retailers. You know, they see an idea from overseas and pinch it.

Danny Elassaad 17:17

Yeah, absolutely. But not just that. I mean, it's a two way street. We're also open to our partners overseas. You know, there's times where we've been able to positively influence their operations.

Drew Blackman 17:28

How is the Australian market as such, compared to overseas, Are we leaders in this area?

Clayton Blackman 17:34

I think Australia for the size of our population. And for its isolation from the rest of the world, we will and truly punch above our weight.

Drew Blackman 17:44

I think that's not that's in a lot of things. And you see us even in sport that the size of our population, the amount of gold medals, we win at the Olympics and things like that. But then also in business, you see how many businesses have started in Australia? And now worldwide? Yeah. Or people have left and built their business overseas, but originally background here in Australia.

Danny Elssaad 18:10

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, you know, certain things that that really stick out to mind. Within our space, for example, is the evolution of low voltage systems to drive blinds and awnings and shutters. Australia is absolutely the world leader. Dad has played a significant role in that with his background in solar engineering. But today, we're now seeing Australian innovations being utilised overseas. Yeah, it's really exciting.

Clayton Blackman 18:38

I see the same in the products that we manufacture. And I've had the opportunity like you to go overseas and see what's happening. These other countries, some of the stuff that they don't even think about what the products that we manufacture for their retail tenancies. It's just we're well and truly in front. Yeah, absolutely.

Drew Blackman 18:58

Now away from work. How do you relax?

Danny Elssaad 19:01

Woah, I look love to just hang out with friends sort of taken up some surfing lessons at the moment, kind of kind of get out in the water and have a bit of fun. Aside from that just swimming and stuff like

Drew Blackman 19:15

you do like a bit of travel. I do I do do a fair bit of travel so yeah, I any chance I get I like to head overseas and hang out with mates. Is that both work and leisure sometimes both.

Clayton Blackman 19:31

At the end of our podcast we have our first five questions and these are just quick five questions to ask our guests to know you a little bit better. So what would be your last meal?

Danny Elssaad 19:42

Pasta crab pasta, crab pasta pretty good. Yeah painos in Alexandria, highly recommend it. Yeah, really good.

Drew Blackman 19:53

Okay, pinos in Alexandria. If you want to come on board Yeah, yes. So yeah, good. It was yes. To go with your pasta.

Clayton Blackman 20:07

If you get mentioned Danny's name Danny's name. Yes. Yeah. No worries. Glass of red tonight? A glass of red.

Drew Blackman 20:14

Oh, that's my question to go with your pasta. What's your drink of choice? love a good red? Right? Yeah. Nice Pinot Noir. Adelaide, Adelaide Hills or New Zealand beautiful. You get to visit the wineries mount their Barrossa

Danny Elassaad 20:29

Yeah, I do Yeah.

Clayton Blackman 20:31

Any favourites?

Drew Blackman 20:31

There's a guy. I'm just trying to remember his his got the oldest grenache vines in the world. Right. His name is just escaping me right now. It'll come to me. But it's it's certainly not on the main tourist trail. Cirillo, Marco Cirilo wines. Nice. Very nice. Very nice. It's a bit of a shed and you would very unassuming. All those good wines like that are in the Barossa are like that. Yeah. Those little shed backyard ones. They're all like that. Yeah. But if you can, if you can find your way there. You won't be disappointed. Highly recommended. Highly recommended. What store do you shop at the most?

Danny Elassaad 21:12

Probably Calibre Clothing. Yeah, to do buy a lot. A lot of stuff there. So I think I'm pretty good customer there.

Clayton Blackman 21:20

I'm expecting a couple of freebies from Calibre.

Drew Blackman 21:22

Yeah, no cash for comments. Absolutely. Yeah. So we have wine covered. You know, Calibre, you want to come on board and

Clayton Blackman 21:31

get the whole outfit here soon

Drew Blackman 21:32

exactly. All right.

Danny Elssaad 21:33

You guys should be able to supply them Doors now.

Clayton Blackman 21:35

Exactly. Right. Yeah.

Drew Blackman 21:37

And if Maserati's listening, I'm partial to a Maserati.

Danny Elssaad 21:42

Yeah. Yeah, I'll second that.

Clayton Blackman 21:48

Any samples?

Drew Blackman 21:49

Any samples? Yes. If you were famous, what would you be famous for

Danny Elssaad 21:53

really bad dad jokes and puns.

Drew Blackman 21:57

What's your latest one then?

Danny Elssaad 21:59

Nothing.

Clayton Blackman 21:59

Have these been passed on from generation after generation.

Danny Elssaad 22:04

They probably have nothing comes to mind. But you know, if there's an opportunity for a good pun later ill throw it in.

Drew Blackman 22:10

how good dad jokes are.

Danny Elssaad 22:12

They're really good. It's probably part of the reason why I'm single.

Clayton Blackman 22:18

Your sense of humour.

Danny Elassaad 22:19

Pretty much

Drew Blackman 22:20

any ladies listening? Let us know. And we might be able to set you up on a date with Danny. At the pasta joint.

Clayton Blackman 22:28

Yeah, . Yeah.

Danny Elassaad 22:31

Pinos. Yeah, look forward to it

Drew Blackman 22:33

But now I'm partial to a dad joke as well. And my kids say just shake their head roll their eyes. It's

Danny Elassaad 22:43

it's their reaction. That's priceless. Yeah. Makes it all worth it

Drew Blackman 22:47

It's good. And all I even think about them later on and piss myself laughing. And they'll look over Yeah. What are you laughing at? That joke I told about three hours ago, and they just still shaking their head. That's quite good. Now, if heaven does exist, what would God say when you arrive at the pearly gates?

Danny Elassaad 23:03

Probably what are you doing here? That's probably probably not where I was meant to be? I think

Drew Blackman 23:08

good answer. I think that's my answer as well. Yeah. It's not your time as such. Yeah.

Clayton Blackman 23:14

Been Great for Danny to come in and provide us with information and the background of CW Products.

Drew Blackman 23:21

Yeah, it's quite an interesting story. And I did a little bit of research yesterday and knowing the background there to last 35 years in any business, and then have a family business last over 35 years. It's quite an honour to get some insight into that. So your dad and you and the whole family should be extremely proud of having that background.

Danny Elassaad 23:46

No, thanks, guys. Really appreciate it. And certainly appreciate you guys having me today. But you know, we're incredibly proud of the KRGS Story. I mean, we've seen you guys evolve over the years

and be the powerhouse that you are today. And much like us it's very much a hands on family affair.
And

Clayton Blackman 24:03

yeah, like I said earlier, most the relationships that we have, yeah, absolutely.

Danny Elassaad 24:08

So yeah, thank you and keep up the good work.

Clayton Blackman 24:10

pleasure, mate

Drew Blackman 24:12

Thanks for joining us, mate. Have a great day. Cheers. That wraps up our chat with Danny from CW products. If you've missed any of our previous episodes, check them out at our website, www.KRGSdoors.com.au forward slash podcasts or on your favourite podcast player. Don't forget to hit the subscribe button, as it boosts our rankings and also boosts my ego. Our next episode we chat to numbers genius and rugby league super coach Jim Pizanias from MPK Accountants where we will chat finances for small businesses. And Jim opens up about his coaching career at Newtown Jets, Cronulla sharks and the Greek international rugby league team. Again, thanks for listening. You could be anywhere in the world but you're here with us till next time cheers. The KRGS Doors show proudly brought to you by KRGS Doors for all your shopfront Roller Shutters, roller grilles, folding closures and bifold doors visit www.KRGSdoors.com.au