



A Lipse Too chair adorned with white croc cowhide, POA, from the Capelli Collection.



TEXTILES | **JOSH TOPELBERG** | DECOR DESIGN CENTRE

Josh Topelberg was a young student with a beach habit when he joined the family business a decade ago. He didn't want the keys; he was just filling a gap. "It was never a path of destiny," says the now 33-year-old with degrees in commerce and arts. Likewise for older brother Avi, a law and commerce graduate who spent the noughties climbing a corporate ladder in Sydney.

However, design was clearly in the gene pool. Avi now runs the Sydney office for Decor Design Centre, Josh drives the home base in Perth. Father Alex is still involved in the business he bought 45 years ago after the sudden death of his employer (he moved the premises to a family property in William Street in 1971). Mother Ruth heads up the textiles division. "It can present as a suffocating environment, but it works well for us," says Josh of the work/family dynamic. "We're good at separating business and personal."

Josh says the recent generational change has become a real flavour of the business, a wholesaler of leather and textiles to the furniture and design industry. A few modern touches – progress towards a paperless office, new interactive functions on the website – reflect the youthful influence. But it's really the fresh take on old-fashioned values – quality and service – that keep the business in award-winning shape.

"If it can be done in leather, we can source it, that's our tagline." And if you need it thicker, smoother, a different colour or delivered at 5am on a Saturday, that's no problem. "Every year we travel the world looking for new and different products. We want to translate our passion for good, clever, clean design into marketable products."

Josh, also a councillor with the Town of Vincent, enjoys overseeing the supply chain from source to happy customer. "I love the process," he says. "We have upholstery leather that could end up as a chair in someone's house, or as wall panelling in a hotel in South-East Asia. There's always a strong connection between the end-user and the product because it ends up in their home or office."

"We travel the world looking for new products. We want to translate our passion for good, clever, clean design into marketable products"

Despite the widening of the business to Sydney and Melbourne, with clients as far off as India, its cottage-industry roots remain. "When I joined the business, the first call I made on the road was to Vince Scalisi Fine Upholstery. The first call that my father made was to Vince 30 years earlier when he was working out of his garage. "Vince's is still going. His son is in the business, his wife is on the sewing machine and his daughter is in accounts."

The strong focus on relationships isn't all that's at play there. Something Josh established back in his student days has also been realised. "I'm good at working with people, not for people," he says. "I was always going to be my own boss."

Decor Design Centre, 346 William Street, Perth (08) 9328 1077, decordesign.com.au. Decor Design Centre won WA Supplier of the Year at the recent Furnishings Industry Association of Australia State awards.

TOP Josh Topelberg reclines on a Time Out chair upholstered in Picot leather in Silverstone, POA. The patchwork cowhide rug is from the Capelli Collection. INSET Printed cowhide from Capelli makes a striking upholstery fabric.