

GREATER  BATON ROUGE

BusinessReport

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POSITION

Founder and owner

COMPANY

STONE and CLOTH

WHAT THEY DO

High-quality countertops, flooring and custom furniture

ADDRESS

1575 Lobdell Ave.
and 11840 Airline
Highway

NEXT GOALS

Expand CLOTH,
open additional
locations in Baton
Rouge or other
markets

KrisKlar

BY GABRIELLE BRAUD • PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN BAIAMONTE

SET IN STONE

AROUND 5 A.M. on any given workday, you can find Kris Klar at the gym, working out and listening to various business audiobooks on his headphones. Long before opening STONE in 2009, Klar knew he wanted to start his own business, but finding the right fit took a few years of patient research and learning. After graduating from LSU with a business degree, Klar began his professional career in marketing for a Fortune 500 company, managing employees across four state territories. But even then his sights were set on working for himself. "I was reading everything I could get my hands on, researching business, constantly looking for the industry I wanted to get into," Klar recalls. He eventually settled on the construction industry and decided to specialize in high-end countertops. STONE was born.

CURATED AND CUSTOMIZED

AFTER FIVE YEARS of establishing his business as a local leader for marble, granite and quartz countertops, Klar expanded his offerings to include flooring and this past fall he further diversified the product line, launching a custom furniture division called CLOTH. "I'd set up my business to where I constantly wanted to grow, so when the opportunity presented itself, I was ready to jump on it," Klar says. With extensive, self-taught knowledge of each sector of his business, Klar spends his days acting as both consultant and contractor, meeting with homeowners to discuss countertop installations or running across town to check on commercial projects at hotels or casinos. By providing flooring, countertops and custom furniture selections all under one roof, Klar says he's filling a void in the Baton Rouge home improvement and construction market. In a city with no shortage of furniture, flooring or kitchen and bath stores, STONE and CLOTH focus on offering customization, a comfortable atmosphere and customer ease to separate themselves from the competition.

FEELING AT HOME

BY DESIGNING A showroom space that is less industrial and more homey, Klar has managed to create an atmosphere where retail customers and interior designers can relax on a CLOTH couch while sifting through the 2,500 customizable fabric options, or selecting the right flooring to complement a granite countertop. "That is how we've picked up a lot of the contractors we work with," Klar says, "because instead of their clients having to jump around town going to some very industrial feeling places, we keep it in house, and it is in a very comfortable setting." With nearly 60% of Klar's business coming from contractors and about 30% from interior designers, Klar has discovered there is "huge demand" for his business model. "Since 2009, we've grown at 40 to 60 percent every year," he says. "It has been really exciting for me to take a business from zero and grow it that quickly."

DILIGENT BY DESIGN

WITH ONE FOOT in the interior design world and another in construction, the most challenging part of Klar's business model is controlling the hundreds of details that often go into a single project. With help from two sales managers and five sales staff members who work at his company's two Baton Rouge locations, comprehensive procedures are the key to keeping things in order, Klar says. Nonetheless, he can't help but be hands-on with his clients. "If you name a customer from the past six months, I can probably name the countertops and floors we installed or the furniture they bought," Klar says. In order to avoid getting bogged down in the intricate operations of the business, Klar enjoys setting aside time each week for long-term planning and goal setting. As a result, he has developed and executed a thoughtful and deliberate marketing plan, ranging from print and online ads to charitable sponsorships aligning CLOTH and STONE with other interior designers, contractors and organizations that also value high standards for customer service and quality.