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Slick ROCK INC.

LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS



SLICK ROCK ENTREPRENEURS TURN CONCRETE INTO GOLD

by Joseph Lilli

David Harris and David Forren are two entrepreneurs who have figured out how to turn concrete into gold.

Well, not literally . . . but they are the masterminds behind Slick Rock, a successful national and international concrete site furnishing business in Boerne. The business partners who first created the largely successful Riverbed Concrete Inc. in 2003 have recently expanded their entrepreneurship with the formation of Slick Rock Inc.

Slick Rock is a manufacturer of high-end architectural pre-cast concrete – namely, large scale planters, fire-bowls, and water features. And when I say “large,” I’m not kidding.

Massive in size, the products range from 350 to 6000 pounds. The city of Austin-Bergstrom International Airport certainly agreed. They commissioned one of the company’s first commercial orders.

“Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and the architectural firm responsible for the building’s design approached us to address a growing concern. They were searching for a way to provide



security against terrorist attack, while enhancing the building’s new contemporary design.

“They wanted an extremely strong product that can literally stop a semi-truck as a perimeter security device (PSD), but that could also provide aesthetic appeal to the building’s décor. Slick Rock was the perfect fit,” Harris says.

Harris is quick to note that the concrete they use in their one-of-a-kind products is not your plain, run-of-the-mill concrete. It’s made from a proprietary “ultra-high performance” formula that has taken 12 years to develop, thereby lifting Slick Rock’s finished products to a new standard of industry excellence.

The recipe consists of cement, finely graded sands, entrained fibers, latex and acrylic compounds, blended pozzolan, water reducers and plasticizers. It quickly reached an impressive 12,000 pounds per square inch (psi).

After a recent strength test conducted by an independent testing facility, the owner initially didn’t believe the test sample was actually made from concrete. He declared the material was “twice as strong as any other concrete he’s tested in his career.”

IN THE MIX

The concrete formula is poured into custom fiberglass molds – handmade in the Philippines to Slick Rock specifications – from which thousands of identical concrete products are made. Each concrete copy is beautiful, durable to last a lifetime, and possesses exceptional strength and flexibility – properties far superior to typical concrete.

During the proprietary finishing process, technicians add vibrant, attractive colors with modeled undertones unique to Slick Rock products. These colors pair well with a wide variety of architectural styles and settings.

The use of fiberglass as a mold material is unique in the industry and stems from Harris’s background.

“Growing up, my family built Texas’ largest Coast Guard certified Trimaran yacht in our backyard. It was an interesting way to grow up, but from a very early age I’ve worked with fiberglass. When used to mold concrete, fiberglass is a very expressive material,” he says.

The company’s unique molds allow Slick Rock craftsmen the flexibility to create unique shapes, sizes, and designs with complex and compound curves that are not possible with other molding materials.

A PASSION AND DRIVE TO SUCCEED

Building a thriving business from scratch can be hard for any entrepreneur. It takes the kind of tenacity and relentless dedication that comes from a personal passion and the drive



to succeed.

Successful entrepreneurs who focus on innovative products must also discover the strategies to deliver their new and unique products by creating demand in previously underserved markets. This is precisely what Harris, Forren and the Slick Rock team have accomplished.

“Once we created the products, we worked to effectively build a well-defined target market around what we created. Contractors and some of the most recognized architectural firms in the country have sought the exceptional product quality and unique and unique performance standards we had to offer, and demand took off very rapidly,” Harris remarks.

continued on page 18



pictured center: David Harris and David Forren, along with the Slick Rock Inc. team – photo by Snap Chic Photography

WIDE COMMERCIAL USE

Slick Rock – a subsidiary of Riverbed Concrete – mass produces several superior-quality concrete products that add function and aesthetic appeal to architectural projects. With a focus on large commercial projects, architects, landscape architects, builders, and general contractors widely use their products in major commercial construction projects. Across the U.S., customers such as retail centers, city planners, restaurants, and schools/universities, just to name a few, are quickly discovering and utilizing the benefits of Slick Rock products.

“While we created Riverbed Concrete to meet a growing demand for customized decorative concrete products back in 2003, we have now established Slick



Rock to mass produce high-end concrete products for a national market where our sales are taking us well outside the State of Texas,” says Harris, president and CEO of the two companies.

With customer requests from as far off as Saudi Arabia, the Maldives Islands, and London, England, the appeal for their products is very far reaching.

“With Slick Rock, we now have the luxury to focus on production rates and efficiency in a different light from how we track custom projects. With this, we are better able to focus our efforts in exposing our products to a much broader target audience,” he adds.



MANUFACTURED IN BOERNE

Slick Rock pre-cast concrete products are manufactured exclusively in Boerne and are shipped across the country from its local production facility.

“Through a close network of trucking companies and surprisingly affordable shipping rates, considering how large and heavy our products are, we have found Boerne’s central location and easy access to both IH-10 and I-35 to be an ideal location for national distribution,” Harris says.

To accommodate the rising demand for Slick Rock products, the company built a 12,000 square foot production facility in 2014, located at 13 Pfeiffer Road in Boerne. A 3,000 square foot addition quickly followed, with plans for an additional production area to keep up with growing demand and an extension of their showroom that’s already in the works.

FIBERGLASS ALTERNATIVES

“We are in the beginning stages of offering our Slick Rock products in light weight fiberglass alternatives.



These alternatives will retail at lower price points and are directed towards a customer market that doesn’t require the exceptional strength and weight of our commercially developed concrete products.

“Fiberglass enables us to offer exciting new shapes, sizes, colors, and textures that will be unique to the fiberglass line of products, and it allows us to explore a wider variety of possibilities that are not possible with concrete,” Harris declares.

Many of these fiberglass products will be available through direct sale or garden center/home improvement retailers.

“Until now, the residential market has been a small part of Slick Rock’s business strategy, but with the introduction of lightweight fiberglass alternatives that will quickly change. With the ease of availability through retail chains, and the inherent light and resilient properties of fiberglass, this addition makes our product offerings much more accessible for DIY installation to beautify not only commercial spaces, but also individual homes,” he says.

While Slick Rock concrete products will continue to be manufactured in Boerne, the fiberglass products will be manufactured exclusively for Slick Rock in the Philippines and Yucatan, Mexico, and imported to Texas for national distribution.

“It will be a very big step towards expanding the Slick Rock product line and growing our sales,” Harris adds.

EMPLOYEE-FOCUSED

Besides the exceptionally high-quality concrete products for which Slick Rock is known for, there are many other reasons for their overwhelming success – creative innovation, outside-the-box thinking, and specializing in a select few areas of expertise, to name a few.



Yet, Harris also points to his dedicated employees of both Riverbed Concrete Inc. and Slick Rock Inc., and states that none of Slick Rock’s success would have been possible without the quality and dedication of its employees.

“I just can’t say enough about our tremendous team of individuals – all very dedicated and passionate about the products and services that we provide. Each brings a unique skill set and dedication that I can directly attribute towards every step of our growth.

Our team works tirelessly every day to create, market, and sell our one-of-a-kind products. I can’t say enough about how proud and humbled I am to work with such an amazing group of individuals.”

When it comes to what lies ahead for Slick Rock and its high-quality, elegantly crafted concrete and fiberglass products, perhaps French author and visionary Jules Verne says it best, “Anything one person can imagine, other people can make real.”

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