

Leeds Manufacturing

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Plastic Origami Builds Retail Sales



The design and production ingenuity of a Leeds-based plastics company is helping hard-pressed retailers to maximise sales growth in today's tough trading climate.

Design-led Bartuf Systems specialises in the conception, manufacture and assembly of high quality display systems for leading high street names, supermarkets and motorway service area operators. By understanding the psychology of selling, the company has grown from five employees at launch ten years ago, to 65 today and £7.5m turnover.

Expansion led to a £ 250,000 investment in a purpose-built 18,000 square feet production unit and headquarters in Armley two years ago, while continued growth has involved retention of the firm's original Holbeck headquarters premises. Success has evolved through strong design skills, top quality service and products and the speedy response essential in retailing.

The company also owns a Hull graphics firm and operations director Andrew Bowman says: "We're by no means the lowest cost supplier in retail display systems, but we offer a top quality service measured by nine key performance indicators. Our "despatch on time" target is 98% and we recently celebrated six consecutive weeks at 100% with Leeds' biggest pizza party for all 65 staff."

"Bartuf is a tremendous success story, built on the city's core strengths in retail and manufacturing. Leeds is the UK's second largest production centre outside London and a top five retail destination. The combination of investment, continued growth and customer focus is an excellent example of how to build a strong business and the perfect antidote to current economic troubles," said Coun Andrew Carter, Leeds City Council's executive member for development.

Bartuf's stock-in-trade is the manufacture and assembly of specialist plastics for the retail trade, a procedure Andrew describes as "Origami with plastics." Now customer demand for the firm's experience and know-how is fuelling further growth with growing requests for a complete turnkey operation, including installation of an ever-widening range of display and dispense products fashioned from a particularly robust brand of plastic which was pioneered for retail applications by the Leeds company. And, wherever possible, Bartuf remains loyal to its Leeds and West Yorkshire roots, sourcing various component materials as locally as possible.

This was the case when Marks & Spencer introduced newspaper and magazine sales to its stores – Bartuf devising the store and dispense racks, manufacturing and installing them. Similarly, the firm worked with a major publisher on tailor-made display stands for Morrisons supermarkets. And all Moto Motorway service areas, including the new A1M station near Wetherby, are equipped by Bartuf.

Lifblood of operations is the six-strong team of business development managers, invariably recruited from the sharp end of retailing and covering the UK. Liaising with top retailers, including Marks & Spencer, they feed product ideas and requirements back to the Leeds headquarters.

There, innovative products start life with the in-house design team, equipped with the latest 3D computerised design packages and a sophisticated six-figure software system that tracks the 14,000 product components. A grasp of the psychology of retailing has led to brainwaves such as Q+® Management – a system that helps maximise sales per footfall and impulse buys from a captive shopping audience.

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