

Making it in Leeds

News release from Leeds Manufacturing

1st November 2010



£500,000 Move Grows Bespoke Kitchen Production

Supplying the continued growing demand from independent kitchen retailers against the mass sales of the DIY sheds has led to a major relocation for Yorkshire's Designer Factory Kitchens (DFK).

Having outgrown its Leeds Road base in Bradford, the company has invested £500,000 in moving to Drighlington, Leeds and equipping its new home with state of the art, environmentally friendly production machinery.

DFK was launched 18 years ago as a small retailer in the Cannon Mills complex by Mike Baziw and his wife Karen. As sales grew, they diversified into supplying independent retailers and now have annual sales approaching £3million and 35 employees. Bedroom, bathroom and study furniture has been added to the product range and installed in prestigious locations including Residence 6 in Leeds' former central post office.

Continued investment in CAD-CAM design and production has also led to repeat orders from the medical and dental sectors. And while the firm's USP lies in exploiting the bespoke "one-off" market, it also has the flexibility to satisfy bulk orders from the housing association and contract market.

Managing director Steve North explains: "We have a phenomenal customer base, right across the country, many of them in the south and we're happy with that. This spreads our financial risk and returns healthy margins, but we do retain the flexibility to cope with bulk orders from the contract market. Our marketing budget is invested in modest advertising in the leading trade magazine and an appearance at the main trade exhibition, which this year resulted in over 400 enquiries.

"Our latest automated routing and cutting machine, installed as part of the move, is the first one of its type in the country and cost £175,000. This and our computer-aided design facilities enable us to meet increased volume and unique customer requirements, including the current trend for bow-fronted cabinets.

"On any given day, our trucks heading south could be carrying basic products for a social housing project, or luxury items for a multi-million pound Belgravia home."

Paul Stephens, chief economic services officer at Leeds City Council said: "The new premises give Steve and the team room for further expansion, with plans to install another machine in the near future and a third to follow if demand continues to grow. DFK is a great example of a modern manufacturing business operating in niche markets but with the capacity and flexibility to ramp up production on volume contracts."

Clean Air

DFK's new home is in the former rail station works and while preparation for the relocation was carried out during last summer, the actual move was achieved in a weekend with production uninterrupted.

"Our new landlord, Wharfedale Properties was generous in financial terms and practical help in helping us to make the move so quickly and smoothly," said Steve.

The move enabled installation of the latest recycling system for furniture production, which has reduced waste to landfill, from five skips to zero. Meanwhile efficient enclosed burning of waste sawdust results in clean air discharge into the atmosphere and heating for the factory re-circulated back into the building.

Ends

Photography: DFK managing director Steve North with the new £175,000 machine