

OFAS newsletter

OFFICE FURNITURE ADVISORY SERVICE

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outside the box



Don't be swayed by the doom-mongering. There is always new business to be won, especially if you can look at the world with fresh eyes, writes John Sacks

When times are tough and there doesn't seem to be much easy business around, it's worth looking for other market sectors or territories to exploit. Yes; we know the world's a small place and no market is immune indefinitely from a global downturn, but diverting some resources to find new customers can often produce profitable results.

Perhaps there are some products which, with or without some "tweaking", could be attractive to an export customer or two? You're not looking to gain a massive market share, just some extra business. And you might be able to give customers in a new territory or sector some benefits which they would value and which you couldn't offer to your normal customer base. How about local or regional exclusivity?

Exporting is never easy and needs determination and perseverance. The UK seems to be moving towards a weaker pound, which will help, and companies like Bisley, where a substantial element of the sales go abroad will once again be able to prosper. Those who are thinking about exporting should be encouraged by the prospect of a more favourable currency equilibrium as well as Britain's reputation for well designed and manufactured products.

Continues on page 11...

contents...

product news	02	components	16
company news	09	services	20
contracts	15	personnel	20

comment

I have just noticed – this will be our 50th issue. Something of an achievement in the ever-changing world of office interiors. If I'd realised sooner I'd have baked you all a cake; but thank you for continuing to read our newsletter. I wonder just how many of you remember the very first edition more than 12 years ago?

There have certainly been a lot of changes over those 50 issues. The industry has lost some hugely respected names – Gordon Russell, Voko, J F Nott, Staverton, Project and President, to name just a few – albeit that some of the products are still being manufactured under a different banner. Others such as Beyon and Office Corp were born, briefly made their mark and departed within that time frame.

The current credit crunch will certainly feed through to our industry, if it hasn't already made its presence felt in some quarters. The technology-driven trend toward simpler, less sophisticated commercial furniture not only reduces the unit cost but also removes the need for frequent replacement to stay 'State of the Art'. The clever providers will be looking to diversify to keep turnover steady or increasing (see our lead article).

It will be interesting to see if the forthcoming Orgatec delivers some 'must have' products to liven up the marketplace. The absence of so many of the leviathans of office furniture from the list of exhibitors makes this seem unlikely – but small can be beautiful and can change direction quickly, so we shall see.

margaret haynes,
director, ofas



The Knowledge-Counsel page

Knowledge-Counsel is the compelling source of independent specialists for FMs and the office furniture industry

Knowledge-Counsel @ Triumph Thursday 4 September 2008

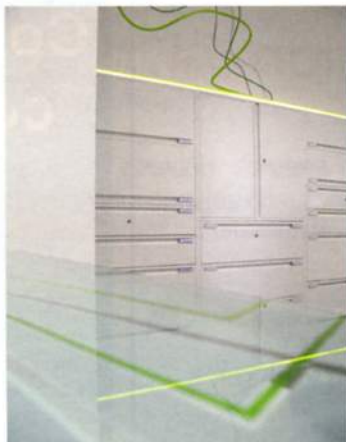
With the passing of the summer (what summer?!), a group of Knowledge-Counsel Consultants and Service Associates gathered at the splendid showroom of Triumph TBS. This is VERY strategically situated in Cross Keys, a wonderful old building in St John Street, shared with two other industry colleagues, and right next door to The Gate – the favourite watering hole of the furniture industry.



Our host for the evening was Triumph's Director of Sales and Marketing, Tony Hendricks, who offered a short introduction to the company and conducted a lightning tour of the five floors of the building.

We were joined on this occasion by Mick Jordan, Editor of Mix Interiors. He gave an overview of the short but extremely successful history of the magazine from its inception in 1999 and launch in 2000 to the present day. In spite of the economic downturn, and approaching its 100th issue, Mix is now printing more pages than ever before.

Mick attributed much of the success to the pro-active ethos; even in the current economic downturn there is always exciting news to report with new showrooms opening, demonstrating an added sophistication in the market. No longer is a showroom purely a place to show product; as is demonstrated by the Triumph showroom; they have become places for people to meet and for events and celebrations. They generally seek to make the maximum use of the space available.



Other things Mick was looking forward to in the industry were the reinstatement of Designer Saturday early in October, with Orgatec later in the month.

Our guest's enthusiasm was a catalyst for the lively discussion which followed.

We are grateful to Mick for making the time to visit us and to Tony for making us all so very welcome.



Health & Safety

Health and Safety continues to be a burning topic, and it is some time since we featured our impressive line up of Consultants in this field who offer pragmatic solutions to such issues. As a quick reminder our number includes: -



Trevor Gates – coming from a furniture background, with a number of years' subsequent experience in the field of workstation assessment,

Trevor offers a service to companies both large and small. Whether you are looking for an assessment for just one employee, or seeking to streamline the whole process for your entire organisation with a computer-based system, he will be able to help you.



Michael Twiss is a qualified ergonomist and you will find that he is well-equipped give advice on improving ergonomics in the working environment, thus delivering a healthier and happier workforce. An entertaining presenter on his subject, he also offers his services as an expert witness.



Duncan Abbott's academic approach to his subject makes him the ideal facilitator at training courses on all subjects connected with ergonomics and health and safety in the workplace. Duncan is also keenly committed to equality of opportunity at work and seeks to promote this through his prolific writings.

Disability Discrimination Audits are a speciality of **Niall Tarrell**. He has worked alongside many large organisations – hotels, shopping malls, large companies – to ensure that they avoid falling foul of the legislation. His input is particularly valuable prior to work on a new project; it is so much more economic to get things right from the start.



To contact any Knowledge-Counsel consultant please call Sara or Margaret on 01344 779 438