

Live long and prosper

Interior fit out and refurbishment contractor, Bridgford Interior, tells *Shop Spec* the formula behind the company's continuing success

As borne out by recent surveys, 2009 was a tough year – turnover and margins were down across the sector. In the case of Bridgford this led to a top down review of procedures and processes, seeking that elusive one per cent saving across all cost drivers. In any situation, there are both winners and losers, which ultimately leads to change. At the start of 2010, the company were hungrier and leaner, ready to combat the year ahead.

In a market where retailers continue to look for best possible value from their supply chains and constantly pose the question: how far can they make their money stretch, when there are more shopfitters than shops to be fitted? Bridgford continue to deliver and have consequently. Last year, it saw an increase in turnover of some 35 per cent from 2009.

Fortunately in a sector that is typically reliant on a small number of long standing relationships, Bridgford have bucked the trend. In 2010, it worked for 26 prestigious clients – 19 of those were retained, and some have been customers in excess of 10 years.

Reliance on generating new business alone was not an option, because of the time it takes to knock on doors and convert a potential customer. In a market with reduced budgets, an incumbent supply chain and aggressive competition, which drives down margins is not a commercial proposition – building relationships with existing clients and enhancing exposure was the adopted and preferred route, which appears to have paid dividends.

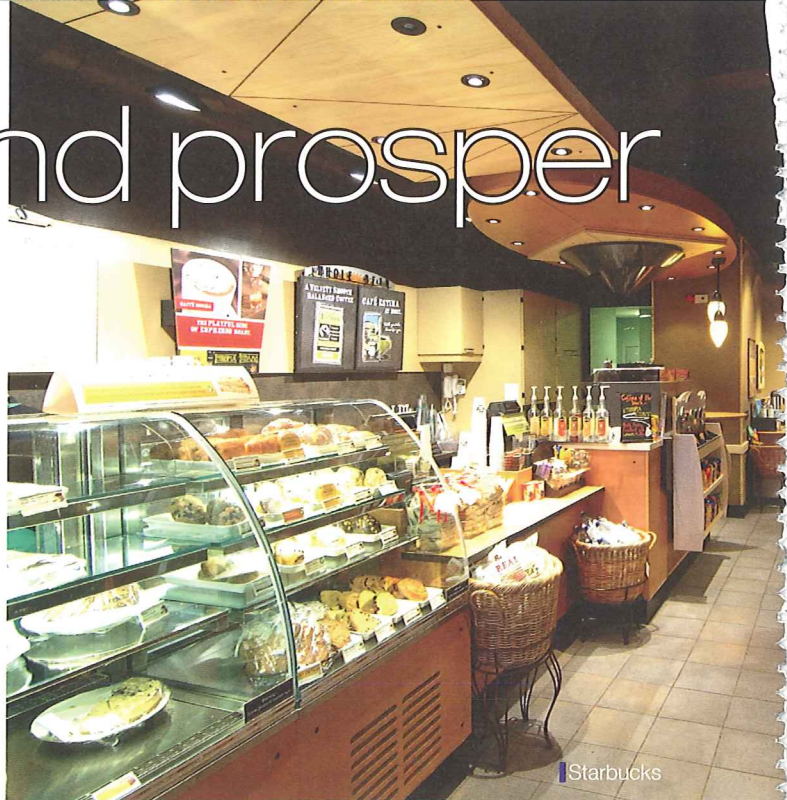
The business

Bridgford Interior's young and dynamic team experience spans all sectors of the industry from client side, professional consultant, through to trade operative – producing a balanced and considered result time after time.

In the current market, it is a given that a business has to be competent in its chosen field to stay afloat – Bridgford, whilst embracing the competitive margins have remained fiscally stable, and have sought to enhance their standing in terms of sustainability. This year has seen accreditation to Forestry Stewardship Council, the Considerate Constructor scheme and completion of a fast track ISO 14001 accreditation scheme.

The company says that whilst others talk about right first time, they do it. The project comes first every single time, sometimes at the detriment to Bridgford, but project delivery and relationships formed as a result is the key to the company's success.

Managing director, Paul Cockle puts the business offer in simple terms. Saying, "Offering an end-to-end solution, we have full engagement at all levels throughout any project cycle. Everything we do is focused on relationships. We strip away the corporate brand names and deal with the people at the coal face, continuing to develop both new and existing



Starbucks

business relationships by consistently providing commercially viable solutions to a range of clients.

"We are fortunate enough to be working with the people spending money, relying on the premise of small is beautiful and high volume repeat business. Consistency and reliability being the gateway to success."

Over the last 12 months, Bridgford Interiors have seen a growth in both project portfolio and turnover alike working with various retained clients such as TK Maxx, Starbucks, Dixons Retail, Toys R Us, O2, and Asda.

Martin Fahey, commercial director cites his experience of "a 21 per cent increase in enquiries – tender activity this year has been at record levels as retail and leisure clients alike look outside of their existing supply chain towards contractors such as Bridgford in search of better value, this has led to new opportunities with clients such as Best Buy, Halford Autocentres, Strada Restaurant, V&A Museum, BHS, Primark, and Wilkinson."

Flagship schemes completed by the business in 2010 include Vue Multiplex Cinema at Westfield London, Homesense offer at Merry Hill, and the 3rd UK store for the American electrical retailer, Best Buy, at Merry Hill.

The formula to success

Bridgford says the formula is simple – it provides a fit out and management service and adds value where it counts. Ensuring the optimum balance of time, cost and quality. The business has the flexibility to adapt and manage changing expectations and objectives, with the benefit of competent and experienced handpicked site teams, which in turn enhance client relationships.

Alan Palmer, business development director at Bridgford, says, "Our people are our most valuable asset – they genuinely get excited about their work. The majority of our people are from a trade background and understand the issues that are faced on-site, having learnt the business from the bottom up.

"Our ability to plan, organise and deliver projects in a professional manner has led to a high proportion of repeat business, which is a true testimony to performance."

The future

"Our strategy for the future has got to be 'more of the same'," concludes Alan. "Strengthening existing relationships and winning new business, whilst looking to secure premium work through recommendation and in complementary sectors. A focus on longer-term agreements and preferred contractor status has been the key to our success."

With the forecast for the year ahead described as "difficult at best", Bridgford will continue with a concentrated effort on marketing to improve their new business pipeline and seek to stay closer than ever to their existing contacts.

No better words summarise the current market we find ourselves in, then Benjamin Franklin's "A penny saved is a penny earned".



Best Buy