

RLI
Cover
Story
Bridgford
Interiors



Life at XX

IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT IT HAS BEEN A YEAR SINCE WE LAST CAUGHT UP WITH SPECIALIST INTERIOR FIT-OUT AND REFURBISHMENT CONTRACTOR, BRIDGFORD INTERIORS' BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR ALAN PALMER. THIS YEAR IN PARTICULAR SEEMS TO HAVE PASSED BY QUICKER THAN EVER, AN INDICATION OF WORKING CONTINUOUSLY AT UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS IN RECENT TIMES...



Bridgford has been around now for 20 years, commencing business in July 1994, and has built a reputation that is second to none.

Built on trust, the company is fortunate to have sustained relationships with an enviable list of retained clients, such as TK Maxx, Vue Cinema, M&S, Screwfix, Starbucks and Carphone Warehouse, which are the mainstay of the business.

Palmer recites the age-old mantra 'if you stand still you are going backwards' and continues with tales of the past 12 months which have seen Bridgford diversify further into fashion, cinemas and car showrooms. New projects that stand out this year include the Curzon Cinema at Victoria, the flagship American Eagle store at Westfield Stratford City, Jacamo / Simply B on Oxford Street, the Tesla showroom in Knutsford, various Wagamama refit schemes, J Crew at Sloane Square, Foxtons in Wapping and M&S Simply Food in Prescott.

This contractor is no 'one trick pony', with an involvement in many types of projects across the UK from simple cost-effective design enhancements and initiatives, trading store refits, wholesale

refurbishments designed to increase higher returns per square foot and hospitality schemes to increase dwell time, through to new store development programmes and complex leisure schemes.

As we go to print, Bridgford is embarking on a women's store for J Crew in Paris which may in turn lead to other opportunities on foreign shores. We wish them Bon Voyage. And on the travel theme... the company has also been awarded a scheme for Thomas Pink at St Pancras.

"All businesses require investment and in a business such as ours there is no better channel than our staff. We need to invest in people to build our business, over the past 12 months we have enhanced our Contracts, Commercial and H&S teams to assist with our continued growth strategy," says Palmer.

Asked what Bridgfords do, he confides that "Our task is to create a physical presence, which in turn forms a memorable customer journey. We have the power to shape and change the consumer's experience by creating desirable spaces on behalf of our clients. The interactive hubs of today are a catalyst for consumer intuitive decisions - the more of these decisions converted in a dramatic environment with local provenance the better for all of us."

Managing Director Paul Cockle believes that the success of the business rests with the personal connections that are formed, they really make the difference. "We deal with people and not brand names," he explains. "By integrating dedicated teams with specific clients it allows us to develop long-term working relationships and encourage clear lines of communication, which ensure that the flow of information is timely, accurate and effective. We work together to improve performance as a whole."

Palmer continues: "We know that our clients have sophisticated expectations, we are not afraid to ask the critical questions. We seek first to understand and then to be understood and prioritise the issues. With early involvement comes the opportunity to add value - to provide a flexible and tailored approach, to enhance the design, be innovative in the use of materials."

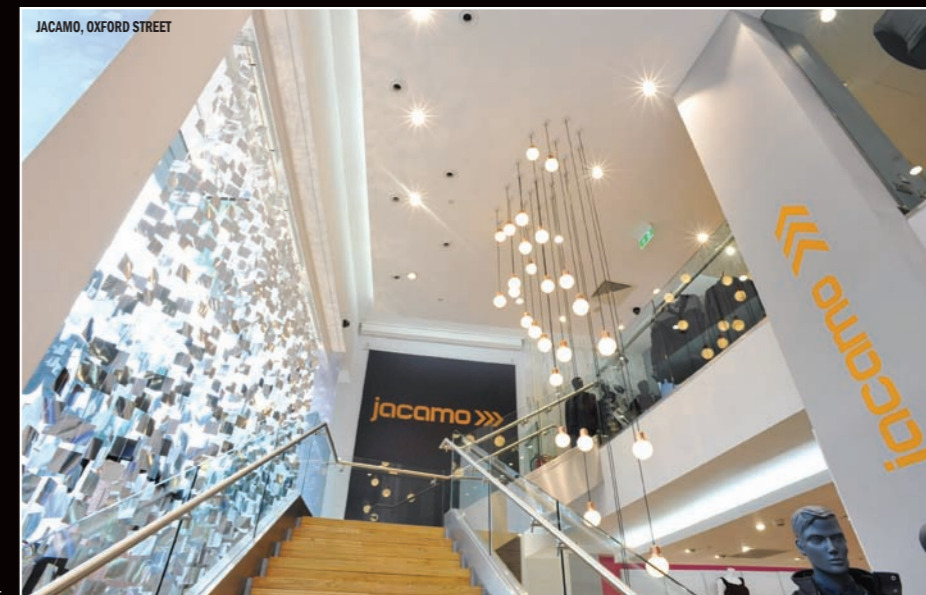
Being ordinary is boring, he says. The company seeks the extra-ordinary. Differentiation means being able to offer structural alterations and building works within specialist services to facilitate interior requirements, being responsive to change: a can-do attitude, approaching every project - big or small - with commitment and passion, seeking continuous improvement from lessons learnt. It offers a comprehensive approach to total customer satisfaction, with a constant and consistent focus on quality and attention to detail culminating in repeat business.

"Our ability to plan, organise and deliver projects in a professional manner underlies the true testimony to performance which lies in the high proportion of repeat business enjoyed," adds Palmer. "A focus on framework agreements and preferred contractor status is key."

In respect of future challenges, Commercial Director Martin Fahey adds that shopfitting remains a fiercely competitive environment in which to trade, but is none-the-less inspiring: "We share a unified vision with our clients for cost efficiency and not just cost cutting. Cost reduction and investment are seen as working hand-in-hand to achieve objectives."

As the retail landscape evolves clients are looking for quality of space and not quantity to showcase their wares. With an increasing reliance on online, mobile, tablet, phablet, multi-channel, omni-channel, social media etc, the physical store provides an escape, a job, an experience, a chance to meet with friends, long live the store!

With a healthy pipeline for 2015, exceeding that



of the same period last year, Bridgford plans to build upon the stability and strength of its business to grow market share by adding value. The company's strategy for the future has got to be more of the same - strengthening existing relationships, winning new business whilst looking to secure premium work through recommendation and in complimentary sectors

Above all, Bridgford appears optimistic

for the future and continues to demonstrate resilience and an appetite for a challenge. Its business model appeals to smaller companies, thanks largely to its director-level involvement, through to larger blue chip companies who demand resources and rigorous process management.

"All we seek is the opportunity," Palmer concludes, "our service will dictate the future."