

# ACHIEVING EXPANSION BY DESIGN

A business started in a back bedroom with the garage as its warehouse has grown to employ nearly 250 people in 12 regions with a £35m annual turnover

By CAROLINE HARDY

**D**ESIGNER Contracts, a member of the CFA based in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, started trading in 1992 with its current MD, Peter Kelsey, at the helm.

Peter who had 20 years in the industry at the time recalls those early days. 'I started in the industry in 1972 with a furnishing retail group, selling from rolls stock. The carpet department was on the first floor so we carried the rolls upstairs!'

'We set up our business in 1992 in our back bedroom. The warehouse was our garage. However, we were backed by an international retail group.'

The major milestone in the company's early history came in 2004 when the international retail group went into administration and Designer Contracts bought the contracts division.

'In 2004 we had 80 people and a £10m turnover. Now we have nearly 250 people, across 12 regions, and a £35m turnover.'

Designer Contracts started solely in the newbuild market but soon realised it had the capability to get involved with most sectors.

'We're now involved with new build, social housing, education, care homes, commercial offices, healthcare, hospitality, local authorities, rental property and managing agents,' says Peter.

The company specialises in domestic and contract rating floor coverings including

carpet, carpet tiles, domestic vinyl, safety flooring, wood and laminate, and LVTs.

'We're able to offer the right advice and guidance to be able to provide cost-effective solutions depending on the environment in which the flooring is to be installed,' adds Peter, who believes strong contacts are vital to the company's success.

Established relationships have been forged with most of the major flooring manufacturers and suppliers including Polyflor, Gerflor, Tarkett, Forbo, Abingdon, Cormar, Amtico, Karndean, JHS, Heckmondwike, Gradus and Unilin.

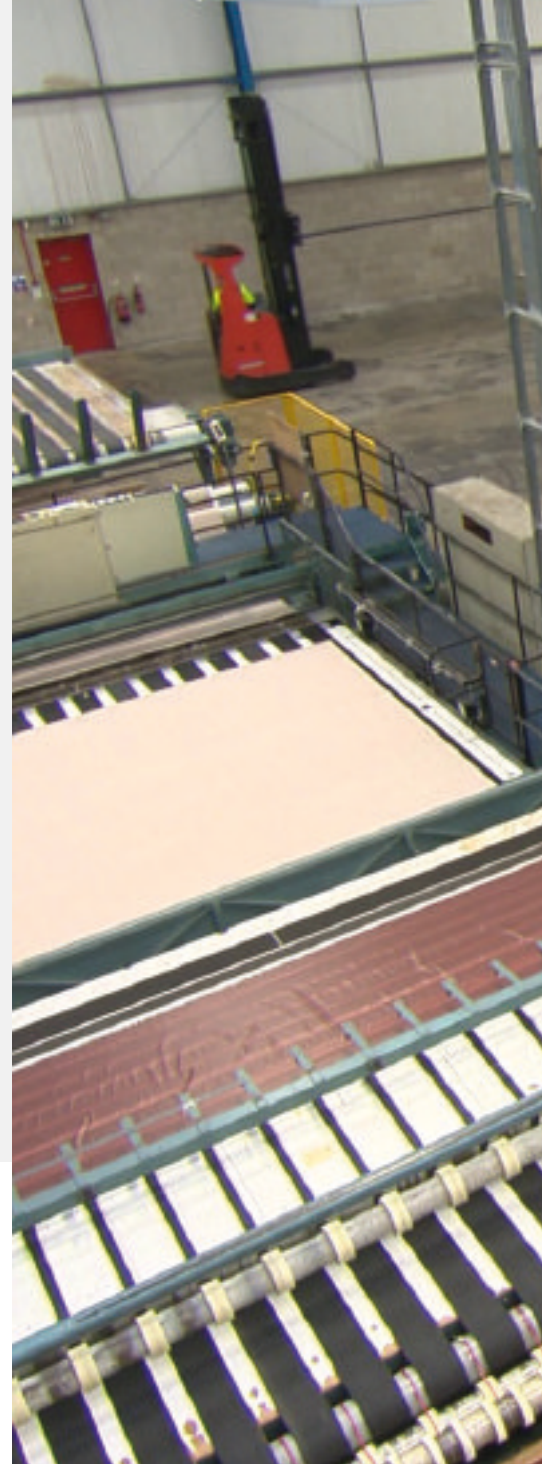
Peter says: 'We look at what our customers want and forge relationships with suppliers that allow us to best meet their needs.'

'It's important for us to ensure our product library allows us meet everyone's requirements.'

'We're constantly talking to our suppliers to keep our offering up-to-date and on trend and make sure we're able to deliver flooring for any budget-driven projects to large installations where certain criteria and specifications have to be met.'

'All manufacturers and suppliers we deal with will have quality control processes in place. All products received by us have passed initial QC checks.'

'We measure quality by regularly reviewing failure or reject rates, level of product returns, number of customer complaints and customer loyalty which is evident from repeat business.'



Our aim is to provide excellent service delivery and value for money throughout the contract.'

Achieving and maintaining a sustainable supply chain is 'very important' to the company so it actively seeks and uses suppliers that are able to provide evidence of their green credentials.

'Sustainability is something we consider within all of our sourcing and selection processes and for the suppliers we use and for the services we provide,' Peter adds.

And he takes a pragmatic view on any hurdles the company may face.

'There are always hurdles to overcome but the best way to do so is to have the right people in place to deal with each situation.'

'Our turnover did drop back when the credit crunch hit but just for a year, then we've been able to move forward again. Margins are tight but we pay our bills on time, so our suppliers like us!'

When it comes to developing new business, the company is in a strong position.



The cutting machines: As part of Designer Contracts' state-of-the-art National Distribution Centre it has two fully automated cutting machines and sortation system accurately processing each and every order at great speed

'We're the UK's largest flooring contractor with 12 regions nationally across the UK,' Peter says.

**'The extra space allows us to accommodate a second state-of-the-art cutting machine and sortation system, helping us respond to the most demanding schedules'**

service can continue to serve our regions quickly and even more efficiently.

We recently trebled our central distribution depot with a move to larger premises. This relocation sees an increase in size from 44,000 to 109,000sq ft and the new warehouse is located close to major road networks, meaning our dedicated distribution

'The extra space also allows us to accommodate a second state-of-the-art cutting machine and sortation system, helping us respond to the most demanding schedules with the capacity to progress and grow further.'

The company also recently expanded its facilities in North London and Essex and the South West allowing it to cater for the increased demand in these regions. Future plans include relocating its North East and North West regional depots and an additional facility in Scotland.

'We've also recently strengthened our customer service support team with key appointments.

'The dedicated team of 20 now includes several customer service managers, fitters, co-ordinators and administrators across their 12 regions.

'We have also bought an additional 10 vehicles to enable swift inspection and remedial action.

'We are also named on several EU



Peter Kelsey, md at Designer Contracts



A staircase installed by Designer Contracts at the Furniture Makers Hall in London



One of Designer Contracts' customer service fitter vans

compliant frameworks, PfH (Procurement for Housing) ESPO (Eastern Shires Procurement Organisation) and CPC (Crescent Purchasing Consortium).

'This has huge advantages for us and our customers as we have undergone an EU compliant process to be named on these frameworks. It allows us to provide a service and product that meets EU guidelines.'

Membership of the CFA is an important factor in the continuing growth and success of the business, Peter says.

'We recognise the CFA is a leading trade association representing the flooring industry. We're proud to be members and to take advantage of the benefits this gives to us.

'Having gone through the CFA membership vetting process, it also gives our customers the reassurance that they are dealing with a reputable flooring contractor who will offer only the highest standard of service and flooring installation.'

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