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To boldly go need not be a trek

How do you choose a systems company from all those who want to supply you? What differentiates one from another and what's in it for you?

Paul Lindsay, general manager of Swish Window and Door Systems, looks at both sides of the equation.

Why are you looking for a systems supplier? Either you want to begin fabricating from scratch or you want to change your current supplier.

Either way, there are plenty of companies out there eager to have your business. But at the end, you need to choose a company that will fulfil your needs and help you expand your business the way you want to.

There are several main areas to consider in order to get the most out of your supplier:

SALES OPPORTUNITIES.

The right system for the market you supply and a complete package of approved products effectively means a 'one stop shop' for fabricators and having everything available from just one source, saves you time, effort and money.

Once you have signed on the dotted line, what support can you expect from your supplier? Many systems companies offer technical, marketing and administrative assistance. A few will go the extra mile to help with lead generation, website design, bespoke marketing campaigns and individually designed literature and point of sale (POS). Do not be afraid to ask exactly what is on offer and to see examples and testimonials to back



It is always daunting to take the step to change systems suppliers but it does not have to be such a problem if the right steps are taken.

up the promises.

Never underestimate the value of a well known brand. If your customer recognises the name of your system and associates it with quality and security, you are already one step ahead of your competitors in what we all know to be a tough market. Branding is very powerful - think added value.

REDUCED MANUFACTURING COSTS AND INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

It is in your new supplier's interest to ensure you have a hassle free change over and to give you assistance in changing over tooling and information technology (IT). Streamlining the production process will save you time and



Paul Lindsay, general manager, Swish Window and Door Systems – "you need to choose a company that will fulfil your needs and help you expand your business the way you want to".

Your supplier may have many years' industry knowledge but its ability to listen to your requirements, to learn and grow from your experiences and to work with you to help you achieve your goals at a comfortable rate, is one of the most valuable assets it can offer you.

THE FABRICATOR'S STORY

Nathan Beddows, managing director, describes how he chose a new system for his company Tipton Windows:

"Nobody likes change because the familiar is comfortable but I knew that I needed to switch suppliers for the good of the company. But at the same time, making such a fundamental change was a huge decision,

wanted to change. I was looking for so much more than a 'low price, high turnover' and promises that never bore fruit. In a difficult market I wanted something exclusive to offer my customers, rather than struggle against every other window company in the area.

"I wrote down all the criteria I would look for in potential suppliers. These included:

- Branded, high quality, comprehensive product range.
- Customer service and support.
- The attitude of the people I would be dealing with day to day.
- Reputation and integrity

"Strangely, price was less important than I thought it would be and I was more interested in getting an all round package that was right for the company.

"I invited 10 systems companies to come and give me an insight into what they could offer. To their credit, three declined immediately, through loyalty to their existing customers in my operating area. After their presentations, the remaining seven were narrowed to the three that ticked most of the boxes on my list.

"My biggest fear was to find myself two years down the line in exactly the same position again. I wanted to be treated as a partner rather than a number and eventually whittled the candidates to just one.

"After many more meetings with Swish and after speaking to some of its existing fabricators in confidence to see how they felt about them, I felt confident that I had made the right decision. I was impressed that as well as fulfilling all my criteria, it approached the partnership in a very open way.

"Of course there have been teething troubles – there are bound to be with anything new. It's a bit like moving house and finding that the heating controls are different to your old ones. Once we got to know the differences, mostly by talking them through, the change over has been easy and I am completely satisfied with the levels of service and support I have had, and continue to receive.

"As soon as I had made the final decision and the deal was done, Tipton could get on with what it does best – make windows."

For more information on the Swish Authorised Fabricator and Installer Scheme, tel: 01455 555330, or visit the website: www.swishwindows.co.uk

"The most important thing to look for when choosing a systems company is the potential to form a long standing, two way relationship."

money as will fabricating a system versatile enough for any style of frame. Importantly, a profile that features post co-extruded (PCE) gasket can increase productivity by up to 10%, reduce stockholding and is proven to save as much as 12.5% in fabrication costs. A bonus of this progressive system is that there is no risk of the gasket shrinking post installation, thus reducing costly service calls for fitters.

STABILITY AND PROFITABILITY

Choose a well established, sound business. It should demonstrate that it has a programme of continual investment in order to develop products, service initiatives and keep abreast of the ever changing market.

However, on top of these tangible benefits, the most important thing to look for when choosing a systems company is the potential to form a long standing, two way relationship.



Nathan Beddows, managing director, Tipton Windows – "Nobody likes change because the familiar is comfortable but I knew that I needed to switch suppliers for the good of the company."

requiring a lot of investment in time and effort and we still needed to look after our present and past customers in terms of service and honouring guarantees.

"I had established the reasons why I