

Kbbreview Industry Awards 2007

CATEGORY: Master Retailer Award for Kitchens

FINALIST: Houseworks, Dublin

How would you describe your business to the judges?

We started our business in 1983 as the exclusive suppliers of SieMatic kitchens throughout the South of Ireland with a total staff of two, a husband and wife team, working from home. Houseworks Ltd. is a family business, with the second generation playing an important role. Six years ago, when SieMatic asked us to open up in Belfast our son joined the company, having come with an accountancy background from Price Waterhouse Coopers. Our son, Ollie, together with his wife, Catherine, have worked hard to make a great success of the Northern Irish branch of houseworks business.

We now employ over 50 people in three Showrooms: Dublin, Cork and Belfast and our Warehouse in Dublin. We have exclusivity for the whole of Ireland (North and South) for SieMatic and our other products. Our annual turnover is €12 million plus. Whilst SieMatic is still our core product, we have substantial appliance sales and we also retail top quality German living, dining and bedroom furniture.

All our products are at the top end of the market and are displayed at least to the same standards as they are in our suppliers own Showrooms.

Our Belfast Showrooms won the kbb Review Showroom Award in 2007, we shall be doubling the size of our Cork Showrooms in early 2008 and we have just completed a ten month project extending our Dublin Showrooms to 14,000 sq. ft. of lifestyle Showrooms - unique in Ireland and England.

Our main market is obviously Ireland but we also sell SieMatic kitchens further afield. This year we have sold/fitted kitchens in Scotland, England, Portugal, Spain, France and Karachi in Pakistan. We are also quoting for 42 villas in Dubai and a very large kitchen in Singapore. SieMatic and the Irish are world-wide !

houseworks' business strategy and objectives:

- Our target market is at the upper end, never middle or lower
- Exclusivity in Ireland for all main products
- Single product type (e.g. only one kitchen brand, etc.)
- Maintain an excellent level of service to our Customer and Supplier base - we have to keep both happy
- Showroom investment
- Branding: this is two-fold, i.e. housworks Ltd. and also our products
- Investment in staff and training (we send all our Design Staff to SieMatic for training)
- Organised staffing structure in place
- Specialist staff members for the different product types including an Appliance Specialist/Sales Person who is a fully trained chef
- Marketing, advertising and PR (€350,000 p.a.)
- Enthusiasm and passion for our products
- Buy at the best prices
- Good financial control, i.e. prompt payment of suppliers , efficient credit control and monthly management accounts

- Our policy is not to be too dependent on one sector of the market, e.g. contracts - we like to maintain a healthy balance between private kitchens and contract kitchens
- Constantly improving our business structure
- Ambition to be the best

In conclusion, it goes without saying that we are in business to stay in business - this means we have to be profitable !

What specific evidence (including financial) can you give that your business is successful ?

- We have been in business for 24 years and have grown it steadily over the years. This is reflected in the number of Showrooms we now have and in the numbers of staff we employ
- We are one of SieMatic's biggest Dealers in the world
- We are Gaggenau's biggest Dealer in the UK and Ireland
- This year we achieved the highest accolade from SieMatic by being included in their hard back Kitchen Book - one of only three dealers in the world featured
- Our substantial financial investment in advertising, branding, marketing and PR activities
- Our constant re-investment in our business. This year we spent €1.5 million extending our Dublin Showrooms to 14,000 sq. ft of 'lifestyle' showrooms displaying SieMatic Kitchens and all our other products
- Steady growth in turnover each year
- Our Export Credit Insurance with our major supplier, SieMatic, is €600,000
- In the 4 week period just ended we paid SieMatic over €1,000,000
- Since first entering the kbb Awards in 2003 we have won awards in different categories every year - last year we scooped the double business awards for Showrooms and Master Retailer which was a first in the history of the Awards
- We believe in giving back to Society, i.e. to people who are homeless, sick, etc. and as a result of our success we are able to give to charity each year

What strategy do you have for the future ?

We plan to continue to consolidate and grow our existing business and generate a suitable return on our investment in our business over all the years, specifically in the following areas:

- Promote our new Dublin Lifestyle Showrooms to obtain the utmost return from this investment
- We will double the size of our Cork Showrooms (yet again!) commencing work in December 2007
- Begin looking for a larger premises in Belfast - our award-winning Showrooms is not now large enough to display our complete range of products: SieMatic Kitchens, Rolf Benz Living and Dining Furniture, Wackenhut Bedroom Furniture, Ruf Betten and Kettmaker On-Wall Furniture
- We plan to open a Showrooms in another major Irish city within the next 2-3 years Continue to expand our Appliance business, selling to Customers who are not necessarily changing their kitchen and also to small manufacturers who do not have accounts with the main appliance distributors
- Aim for a growth rate of 20% p.a. (achieved last year)
- Continue to spend on advertising, marketing and PR activities
- We remain as ambitious, enthusiastic and passionate as ever in terms of continuing to develop the branding of SieMatic Kitchens, together with our other products, throughout Ireland

