

## **Kbbreview Industry Awards 2007**

### **CATEGORY: Showroom Award for Bathrooms**

### **FINALIST: Luxury Bathe, Darwen, Lancashire**

#### **What is your overall showroom strategy?**

The luxury Bathe story began in 2005 when successful businessman Tony Bennett and his wife Joyce purchased a house in Ribchester, Lancashire that required the refurbishment of six en-suite bathrooms. Tony and Joyce had visited several bathroom showrooms but were disappointed at the lack of imagination, negative attitude and poor level of service they encountered.

However, during their research they met David Taylor, a bathroom showroom manager who was looking for a new challenge. It was obvious from the outset that all three people had recognised a very obvious gap in the luxury end of the bathroom market in their area.

David shared his vision of a showroom and distribution operation that was truly dedicated to its customers. The formula is deceptively simple:

- Inspirational product
- Talented designers
- A completely customer focussed philosophy
- Reliable expert installation

Tony bought into this concept. As did his business partners Steve Hirst and Steve Kirby. It was agreed to form a new company 'Luxury Bathe Ltd' with state of the art showroom and distribution facilities. This David would run and make it into a market leader in terms of the quality offer to customer together with levels of service that no other showroom would be able to match.

#### **Villeroy & Boch**

The decision was made to work with Villeroy & Boch to set-up the largest dedicated V&B showroom in the UK trading under 'Simply Villeroy & Boch'.

Other manufacturers selected to complement Simply Villeroy & Boch:

Shower enclosures - Daryl

Shower systems - Hansgrohe

Taps - Hansgrohe/Dornbracht

Mirror cabinets - Schieder

Radiators - Acova/Bisque

#### **Roca**

On the evidence of results from out Simply Villeroy & Boch, it was decided to form a contracts division in our Darwen premises that would service builders and developers. The supplier that offered the best support package for this business was Roca and to show our commitment to them we constructed a dedicated 150 sqm showroom that builders could call in and access the most suitable bathroom systems and tiling requirements for their projects. The showroom opened in June 2007 and is continuing to increase sales month on month.

## **How have you considered your customers' journey through the store?**

The location of the showroom was seen as very important and a new business centre situated on a motorway junction was selected as being easy to find and accessible from Junction 4 of the M65. The premises measured 20m x 20m and with a fully fitted mezzanine floor provided a potential 800 sqm. The ground floor and first floor layout features displays of the newest and most popular bathroom collections from Villeroy & Boch together with innovative floor and wall tile designs. The partners had all agreed from the outset that the showroom had to stand out from other showrooms and have the 'wow' factor. It was agreed that to give the customers a unique experience that would have not only working demonstration but that we would also offer a working spa.

We are proud to say that the end result is acclaimed unanimously as 'stunning'.

Customers often stop as they walk in the entrance door to absorb the initial visual impact of the fabulous displays, the oak stairs with chrome and glass balustrade and, of course, our receptionist who welcomes them with an offer of refreshing drink or assistance from one of our sales team. Customers also tend to follow the same route through ground floor then up to mezzanine level, where a sweeping pathway leads around displays in a clockwise direction. At the head of the stairs customers often stop to take in the 180-degree vista - and can often be heard to say 'wow' to their partners.

## **What innovative ideas have you come up with for your showroom that sets you apart?**

The overall concept of the showroom and the attention to every detail across lighting; flooring, air conditioning; sound and television system has been developed to enhance the bathroom displays and customer experience.

Alongside the stunning displays we have a working spa where customers interested in water jet and air jet baths, steam shower enclosures and state of the art shower systems can book an appointment to reserve use of the area and try the systems in privacy prior to purchasing.

Our considerable investment in a dynamic, comprehensive and stylish website that sets the tone for our showroom and product offer ([www.luxurybathe.com](http://www.luxurybathe.com)).

We invested in Virtual Worlds CAD drawing package so customers can get a realistic view of their proposed designs (for both systems and tiling) based on either their own measurements or by our own survey.

Recently we have purchased Easyquote management software; to further improve our presentation to customers and give us greater control over the business information available, that will help the directors focus on what would be the right areas to invest in as the company grows.

When customers ask if we provide installation, we explain that we only offer our recommendation for bathroom fitters who fitted our own showroom displays/tiling as we are confident that they are clear on all aspects of our displayed systems. When customers want their own bathroom fitters to do the work, we invite the fitter to our showroom to provide them with any technical information and drawings that are required. This is working very well, with excellent results and happy customers plus we employ our own driver with our own transport so are able to schedule deliveries with customers and contractors.

The showrooms are open seven days a week, with deliveries Monday to Saturday - which customers tell us is very helpful as it gives a more flexible approach for visiting and resolving design issues as well as receiving goods at first fit stage or complete delivery.

Both showrooms are kept in pristine condition and cleaned six days a week.

We want every customer to feel that we care and that buying their bathroom from us is a pleasure and that we will always listen and discuss any problem or concern that is foreseen. Most important is that they feel we are honest and will accept responsibility if our suppliers or we should let them down.

