

# KBBREVIEW INDUSTRY AWARDS 2009



**CATEGORIES: SHOWROOM AWARD FOR KITCHENS**

**WINNER: HOUSEWORKS, DUBLIN**

## **How would you describe your business to the judges?**

Houseworks is a 25 year old family business retailing high quality kitchen, dining, living room and bedroom furniture, together with appliances and audio-visual products.

Mark and Rosie Shortt started houseworks in 1983 as the exclusive suppliers of SieMatic kitchens in Ireland. The company now employs over 40 people in three Showrooms: Dublin, Cork and Belfast. The Belfast business is run by the Shortt's son and daughter-in-law, Ollie and Catherine, maintaining the family-run element of the business.

- Exclusive supplier in Ireland of SieMatic kitchens with exclusivity for other brands of furniture that we retail (just one supplier for each furniture type).
- SieMatic is our core product, however appliances represent our second largest profit centre with a separate sales person/chef responsible.
- Our business is totally focused at the top end of the market. We know our customers and give them what they want, i.e. top quality branded products and the best of service.
- Choose the right suppliers and establish a good relationship with them – similar to a marriage! After 25 years SieMatic is still our only kitchen product.
- Continual investment in showrooms, staff and all marketing activities.

## **What specific evidence can you give that your business is successful?**

- 25 years in business.
- In 2007/2008 approximately €2 million was spent extending the Dublin and Cork Showrooms.

- Amount of repeat business annually.
- We have fitted SieMatic kitchens in Nigeria, Pakistan, France, Spain and Portugal and recently negotiated a contract for 42 SieMatic kitchens in Dubai.
- Turnover in excess of €XX million.
- One of SieMatic's largest dealers – one of only three dealers in the world featured in their main Kitchen Book distributed worldwide.
- Export credit insurance of €600,000 with SieMatic.
- Gaggenau's biggest dealer in the UK and Ireland.
- Since first entering the kbb Awards in 2003 houseworks has been a multiple winner. In 2007 we scooped the double business awards for 'Showroom' and 'Master Retailer' – a first in the history of the Awards.
- Success means that we are able to give back to society by contributing annually to charity.

## **What strategy do you have for the future?**

In 2008 our economy went into sudden recession – the worst in 25 years – so forget short term business growth!

Short term strategy:

- Audit our complete operation to achieve savings but not at the expense of customer service, Showroom displays, staff training, advertising and marketing. Currently our website is being redesigned as this marketing tool is becoming increasingly important.
- Continue to expand our appliance business, selling to clients who are not changing their kitchen and to small manufacturers.
- We are happy to discuss details of our audit, marketing activities and showroom plans should we be successful as finalists.

Long term strategy:

- Come out of the recession better equipped to take advantage of the upturn.

- Remain as ambitious, enthusiastic and passionate in terms of continuing to develop the branding of SieMatic kitchens, together with our other products, throughout Ireland.

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

- To inspire and excite our clients by displaying a 'lifestyle' design solution in an elegant, spacious and welcoming environment based around SieMatic displays and appliances.
- Display our core product, SieMatic Kitchens, appliances and all of our other furniture ranges to meet the very high standards set by our suppliers in their own showrooms.
- Cookery demonstrations by our in-house chef every three weeks.
- Our showrooms are our best marketing tool and we aim to get as many people as possible to visit.
- Have highly qualified, professional staff always on hand to assist clients with their design and product queries.
- To keep our showrooms fresh, appealing and up to date – we already have SieMatic's award winning S1 Kitchen on display in Dublin and Belfast (the first displays in Ireland and the UK!).
- Showroom display investment is on-going in all three showrooms.
- Opening Hours: 09.30 – 17.30 Monday to Friday and 10.00 – 16.30 on Saturday. We, Mark and Rosie Shortt, are very much hands-on owners and still work six days every week except when away on business/holiday.

## **How have you considered the customer's journey through the store?**

- In our Dublin showroom entry is under our eye-catching Clock Tower, a local landmark and the customer is also enticed in by extensive window frontage.
- On entry the customer is faced by our 'Round Tower' with circular glass staircase to the mezzanine floor.
- The 'Meet and Greet' staff located in the tower welcome them, explain the layout and guide them to the type of furniture they are interested in.
- The visitor will be offered tea, coffee, etc.
- Alternatively, the customer can browse on their own but our policy is to ensure that no one leaves without being spoken to and given brochures.
- Typically the customer browses around the ground floor, then ascends the circular staircase to the mezzanine and descends via the staircase at the opposite end of the showroom.

- Additional designers/sales staff are located on the mezzanine floor
- Our showroom manager has responsibility for ensuring that the showroom is appropriately staffed, kitchen displays and props are clean, tidy and in working condition.
- Free customer car parking is available directly behind the showroom.

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

- Three full working demonstration kitchens: Gaggenau, Siemens and Viking.
- Our Appliance Specialist/Chef holds cookery demonstrations every three weeks.
- An Irish celebrity chef, Andrew Rudd, and a Nutrition Company hold regular cookery classes at houseworks.
- Our 'lifestyle' showroom fitout includes special concrete flooring, used for the first time in Ireland, and is propped with original paintings, sculptures and ceramics.
- 'Technical' kitchen areas showing real life interior spatial planning
- Audio and visual systems by Loewe and T & A.
- Use of wireless, blue tooth, cordless phones and presentation technology.
- Extensive front window display of the recently launched, SieMatic S1 kitchen, winner of 5 Red Dot Design Awards.
- Our showroom is used for marketing presentations, book launches and product launches. During 2008 it featured regularly on Ireland's TV AM channel showing celebrity chefs, such as Tana Ramsey and also TV personalities.

