



profile

▶▶▶ **approach.** Our USP is stocking, and controlling our own manufacturing – everything in our catalogue is in stock and produced here in Norfolk. We have over 135 staff, 200,000 sq ft of manufacturing and sell through a network of about 200 dealers throughout the UK and Ireland.

‘There’s been a lot of turmoil in our market, but we know what our marketplace is, and our position within it. We don’t try to be everything to everybody – otherwise we’ll fall over, as some others have unfortunately done. We try to sell a package, we don’t try to sell the cheapest desk; we try to offer good quality and good service – and a lot of people value that.

‘We’ve made significant investments – in machinery, our powder coating plant and extensive training and recruitment. This gives us flexibility, continuity of supply and quality, not to mention the 10 year guarantee on all standard products. The market focus is on price, but quality is still vitally important – that’s why we’re ISO9001, 14001 and 18001 certified. We’re financially secure too. That was appealing to me when I joined Lee & Plumpton, and it’s really important to our customers, especially now. Everything, even down to our own lorry fleet, is paid for.’

Brendan was keen to point out that the only thing not included were company cars, which strikes us as saying a lot about being a stickler for honesty and accuracy.

We asked Brendan about the future.

‘Well, I’m two and a half years in and very much enjoying the industry and the people. I’ve listened a lot. I’m not trying to break what we do well. We’re a traditional company – for better, for worse. We’re solid – and a bit staid too! But we are starting to change the company step by step. Infrastructure changes, a new website that’s better at giving our customers the information they need. We’ve also

created a new bespoke department, with delivery in under 21 days. Everything else in the catalogue is delivered in 5-7 days. We’re now focusing on next day delivery. We’re plugging gaps.

‘I went to Orgatec for the first time last October. I’m not an expert, but I didn’t see much innovation. I noticed the colours though, so we’ve expanded our palette to offer more A&D appeal. And with the design community in mind we’re about to launch our new bench system as well as other planned new products for the future.

‘In March we purchased Eurotek’s intellectual rights – we now own the trademarks of the brands. Most of the product ranges are very similar to our own, so the most appealing part was that we now have Eurotek’s customer list. We wrote to them all and received a significant response, very positive. Those customers want what we offer – financial security, continuity of supply and excellent quality.

‘We’re looking for double-digit growth, and we’re well on target for it this year. We’re not just saying it, we’re doing it. It’s organic growth too. We’ve looked at the assets of companies that are available for acquisition, but there’s no value there – it’s all been stripped out. Our key word going forward is flexibility. It’s about the ability to react to the marketplace. Our bespoke work’s grown significantly over the last two years and continues to do so. The days are gone when you could switch on the machine at eight in the morning and churn out thousands of the same part all day. What customers want is something bespoke for them, but with the same quality as standard. It doesn’t have to be complicated!

‘I like being out of the corporate rat race. I like living three miles from work. I’ve got three kids, aged one, 10 and 13 – I like spending time with my family. It’s about having the right work-life balance, isn’t it? For me, the family is a big thing and that’s why I like being part of a family owned business.’ ●

