

STILL MOVING ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

It's coming up to a year since Renzacci UK moved into its brand new headquarters. LCT editor Carole Wright caught up with managing director Jason Alexander to find out how the company is faring in Feltham.

Brand new offices did not exactly herald a new beginning for Renzacci UK, but the additional space certainly gave the company a chance to spread its wings in a way that was impossible in its previous home in west London.

The new offices, a 6,000 sq ft facility on the Marlin Park at Feltham, Middlesex have been designed entirely by Renzacci UK with the fitting-out taking place in a three month period between exchange of contracts on 1 September 2008 and the team moving in on 2 December 2008.

Eleven months later, Alexander is still brimming with enthusiasm:

"It was the best thing we ever did," he says.

"We had such limited space in the old offices we couldn't do half of what we do now. This place was literally four walls and we designed everything as we wanted it: all the networking is here, we have proper testing facilities, a proper storeroom, a meeting room... the list goes on and on."

And it is not just the staff who are appreciative of their new surroundings. Visitors are equally impressed.

Alexander continues: "I'm proud to bring clients here and I know for sure we've got at least one order as a direct result of a visit. The client went to see one of our competitors and then came over here and he just said 'Well, you are obviously more professional.'"

Of course, at the end of the day, it's the products rather than the surroundings that count. Renzacci UK is renowned for the stability and longevity of its links with key Italian manufacturers Renzacci SpA and Pony SpA.

The Renzacci SpA connection dates from when Renzacci UK was founded 37 years ago.

The UK distributorship of Pony finishing equipment goes

back just as far, George Alexander having negotiated the original distribution agreement in 1972.

Jason Alexander is vocal in his praise for all his supplier companies. Renzacci drycleaning machines have a worldwide reputation for quality. Pony brand ironing tables, finishing equipment, spotting tables, shirt finishers and presses are consistent favourites. The company also distributes Hawo packaging equipment and ACS conveyor systems.

Alexander comments: "In terms of products the range is fairly stable but at the same time it's constantly evolving. The headlines are always about 'new models'. If you consider it from a Renzacci point of view they launch a new model maybe every six-seven years but they are always changing things and making small improvements.

"Our Progress range of drycleaning machines was launched four years ago. I can't really praise it enough. The machine is an absolute dream. I think in today's environment you've got to be delivering on quality. We're finding that the people who buy our products really know about drycleaning. They do want the best and are not prepared to cut corners."

Like every business, Renzacci has felt the effects of the general economic downturn. Jason Alexander takes a long-term view: "Obviously, we've batted down the hatches, but I think when the economy moves upwards we'll come out stronger. We haven't stopped advertising and we haven't scrimped on PR because I don't think you can. We're keeping our presence out there - flag flying - and I think it's necessary both for ourselves and as an industry.

"I'm very excited about where we are as a company. I think we're doing things right. We've got the right service response time. We've got the best equipment. We've got excellent after sales and training. A lot of it is down to the staff - we really have a fantastic team."

Currently the company is involved in energy saving initiatives with the Carbon Trust. It has



Jason and George Alexander

recently filled its first project under the Carbon Trust banner, which was partly funded by them, for National Drycleaners in Nottingham.

Alexander notes: "The application process is easy with our machines because they are so economical, especially the way we do the installations. We're always looking to try and save clients money. We are genuinely able to tell people that we may cost a bit extra at the front but actually it's going to save them pounds over a five year period so if they can afford it now it makes sense. And the Carbon Trust can help do that. We're registered users now with the Carbon Trust."

Also new is an option to purchase reconditioned machines. However, the

products in this market are subject to stringent conditions and Renzacci has strict rules about the machines it is prepared to offer for sale.

"We generally don't sell machines that are over three years old. I just point blank won't do it. It's not just because of the SED but because I give a proper warranty with them," says Alexander.

So looking forward to the future:

"We've got to keep doing what we're doing at the same time as always trying to get better and better - that's the way forward. If I sell something I want to be proud of it. In terms of volumes it's not like it was in 2007 but we're happy. I've got a few very big projects which hopefully are coming to fruition."



ABOVE: The 'top-of-the-market' Progress drycleaning machine



Home Sweet Home: 9 Marlin Park, Feltham. The privately owned park features 24-hour security ram-proof gates, which are locked every evening at 6pm. The unit itself is protected by sliding steel window bars, electronic entry system, CCTV and a Redcare alarm system



Air conditioned open plan offices, housed on a mezzanine floor, form the heart of the company's administrative system, dealing with sales enquiries, customer service and housing bought and sales ledgers. The mezzanine also houses a boardroom and private offices for Jason and his father, founder of the business and present chairman, George Alexander.

Downstairs is the spare parts stockroom, machine storage area, and service area where machines are given a pre-delivery inspection before installation. A purpose-built 'comms' room houses the company's upgraded computer system, which carries all customer data



Renzacci's Brian Pearce and staff member Gift with some of the children in the new Lekki school building, Nigeria. The company has started a regular charitable initiative. Lekki School was first to benefit thanks to Renzacci's long-standing links as machine supplier for the Garment Care drycleaning and laundry business. The school, for orphans and single parent children, was housed on part of a site used by Garment Care



LEFT: The new location boasts easy transport links by road, rail and air