

# New infrastructure helps R Foden Ltd through market downturn

Since investing in joinery software and internet advertising Mike Foden of R Foden Ltd believes that if it hadn't been for the economy taking a downturn last year Foden's would have been a lot further forward. In reality, because they now have the infrastructure in place to produce high quality joinery they are in a strong position to weather the downturn and capitalise when the market does recover.

R Foden Ltd has a long established reputation in Chester. Run by Mike Foden, the fourth generation of his family involved in building and joinery. Just 5 years ago, Mike decided to concentrate more on the joinery side of the business. Keen to grow the business further he is realistic in the current climate and with 9 staff now and a turnover of half a million pounds his main goal currently is simply to keep his current staff and get through this difficult time. Even though he is reasonably busy at the moment, Mike is not complacent about the future.

His reasons for purchasing software are clear. "I was finding it so time consuming to sit down and work out prices for a number of windows, often all different sizes, and providing prices for hard and softwoods. With each different timber having a different wastage factor I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life in the office working out figures," says Mike. The end result was that not all quotes were priced because it took too long. In reality only the quotes that they thought they could win were quoted.

Like many other small joinery companies, every



penny spent has to be justified. The initial purchase of Joinerysoft's Joinery Management Software (JMS) was helped by a 50% grant from the Welsh Development Agency, however, two years on Mike describes JMS as "one of the best things I've ever bought."

JMS now saves 50% of Mike's time in the office, and with JMS installed on his laptop he is able to quote more jobs, both at home and on site if needed. "This is great when customers are struggling to visualise the design. I can draw windows or doors in front of them so they can see the finished effect," he says. Mike describes the visual element of JMS as really important. True scale diagrams show the customer exactly what they are getting.

During the initial sales demonstration at his premises, Mike could see the potential instantly. "I liked the fact that you can change the wood at the click of a button." He continues, "Often customers don't know what they want and I can suggest softwood windows with hard wood cills if budget is tight."

Mike adds, "JMS is easy to use. It provides us with

accurate costs and enables us to alter our rates to remain competitive, yet profitable. We try and keep our costs down where possible."

Foden's has never advertised in the past relying upon word of mouth. As a member of the Guild of Master Craftsmen and member of Federation of Master Builders, this has been sufficient to ensure continued growth. Never one to rest on his laurels though, Mike has more recently invested in internet advertising. Mike believes, "Because of the current climate you have to spread your wings a bit. You can't be reliant on just the catchment area you used to have."

When they first launched their internet campaign Foden's went nationwide and received enquiries from all over the country for supply and fitting. As a result of this they have now limited fitting to within a 60 mile radius, offering supply only further afield.

The great thing about JMS is that they can respond quickly to internet enquiries and email straight back to the customer a fully itemised quote instantly.

Mike has been pleased with the service received from Joinerysoft, right from the initial two days training. The installer/trainer was a joiner himself and though the training was intense, Mike was able to find his way around the software straight away. "At the end of the day, Joinerysoft offer a great backup service. They are only a telephone call away. Generally if they can't fix the problem over the phone, they can remotely access over the internet," says Mike.

JMS is not simply a quoting package, saving time in the workshop providing cutting lists and machining information.

Keen to grow further, Mike believes JMS has kept them in the market place, helping them to set their standard and present a professional image to their customers. With the building trade suffering, Mike is able to be more responsive to enquiries that come in.

The results are also starting to come through from Foden's website based advertising campaign. Mike says, "We have already picked up some jobs that have been purely internet based. JMS enables me to respond quickly and win work. What ever happens we are in it for the long haul".

R Foden Ltd  
01244 682899  
mike@rfoden.co.uk  
www.rfoden.co.uk  
Joinerysoft Ltd  
01608 643302  
enquiries@joinerysoft.com  
www.joinerysoft.com

