

Dealer profile

Aquila Business Products (Office Furniture)

Aquila's furniture success

In the last six months the interiors division of Scunthorpe-based Aquila Business Products has won a number of key contracts to supply and fit office furniture. In a tough market the £4.3 million company has been successful in winning the kind of contracts that bigger competitors can only dream of. Sales director Phil Sibson says that whilst Aquila has done a number of successful furniture projects in the past, jobs for over 100 desks happened once in a blue moon, until recently.

The first significant recent win was the contract to supply furniture and seating for Peel Airports for the new Robin Hood Airport Doncaster Sheffield. The site was networked and set up items were also supplied for Sevisair Globe Ground and Securicor.

Sibson says the job was completed on very difficult timescales as the airport had to open ready for its first flight by a specific date. The team installed Elite furniture and had to work around existing contractors which made installation hard. On more than one occasion fitters decided not to work in the day but to return at night to gain suitable access. "We have a policy of not letting our clients down and we do what we have to in order to complete the job," he says.

Aquila was set up in 1992 by Steve Brown a former Xerox employee. Phil Sibson, previously

a Director of Nottinghamshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, joined the company in 1999. It is now one of the largest independent dealers in the area and operates from a 7,500 sq ft commercial head office in Scunthorpe, with two retail outlets in Scunthorpe and Goole. When the 8,000sq ft Scunthorpe superstore was opened in April 2004 the company saw retail sales quadruple and it also created additional showroom space for the furniture side of the business, a move that is now reaping enormous dividends.

The prestigious airport contract was then used to demonstrate Aquila's ability to handle very large projects to another very big name, DIY giant B&Q. Sibson met with the company's project manager to discuss tendering for the new B&Q Regional Distribution Centre in Worksop. As a keen helicopter pilot, he decided to take aerial pictures of sites to show this and any future clients and it seemed to help. "You have to be different from the competition," he says. The tender was conducted through SBH who were fitting out the final stages of the building.

As well as the tender Aquila was asked to provide an on site display with included samples of the furniture to be used and relevant drawings.

Aquila Business Products has taken on the might of the major furniture suppliers to win a number of key furniture contracts. Sales director Phil Sibson explains how



David Severn (l) and Phil Sibson head up the successful Aquila furniture team

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As a helicopter pilot Sibson took his own aerial shots of the B&Q site

Once the display was on site it caught the attention of FKI Logistex, a leading supplier of integrated material handling solutions for distribution, baggage handling, freight, parcel, and manufacturing applications, a company also working on the B&Q job. As a direct result, Aquila was asked to tender for a contract for the company’s new call centre operation in Kettering. They fought off stiff competition to win an order of 123 workstations, reception, seating, meeting and boardroom furniture. Three suppliers were short listed and again asked to provide on site samples and presentations.

Aquila competed against specialist companies with many years of tender experience and some major corporate names. Sibson says people like dealing with the company because of its approach. “We are very professional and we keep our promises. Desks are installed, all packaging is removed and we ensure that we always tidy up after ourselves. There is a senior manager on site to ensure that everything runs smoothly.”

David Severn is Aquila’s furniture and interiors specialist. He has spent 23 years in the furniture business and joined Aquila in 2001. He says the company is successful because it “takes great pride in customer satisfaction.”

Severn works closely with Sibson, handling the quotation and order side of the business so that Sibson is free to network with prospective clients and identify future opportunities. “It’s a team effort,” says Sibson. “Winning these jobs involves everybody, particularly the installation teams and our general support staff. The image of Aquila is maintained by everybody from our sales order processing people to the accounts

department and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all.”

Elite Office Furniture has had a 12 year working relationship with the company. National Sales Manager Julian Jowett says it is a business partnership that stands out.

“We pride ourselves on our very high service levels and flexible approach to clients and projects. Our recent success can be measured through winning orders to install furniture at the new B&Q Regional Distribution Centre in Worksop and to the new Robin Hood Airport near Doncaster. Both projects are very high profile and attracted high levels of competition, however, our joint efforts provided the clients with a unique product and service offering that could not be rivalled.”

“Through working as a team we can offer the end user the technical and engineering support as a manufacturer, leaving the product specification and installation to Aquila. Customer fulfilment feedback is closely monitored to ensure exceptional levels of satisfaction are achieved and maintained. We look forward to working with Aquila on several projects already in the pipeline for 2006.”

Sibson concludes: “We work closely with our suppliers and those relationships are essential if you’re to win big furniture installation jobs. We are currently working on projects that exceed the million pound mark and are confident of our chances of success.” ■



Contact details

www.aquila-web.co.uk