



hull's kitchen

Towards the end of our trip to Goole, we found ourselves admiring a brand new BLM Adige. In case you don't know what this little beauty is, allow us to explain. It's a state of the art laser tube cutting machine, and a shiny new one will set you back in excess of half a million of your well earned pounds.

It's appropriate that John Hull concluded our visit to East Yorkshire by showing us his new BLM Adige. Because, a couple of hours earlier, he was chatting about how he got into the furniture business in the first place. He had kind of shrugged modestly in a 'sometimes I pinch myself' sort of way and explained how he started.

'I was an electrical engineer at Drax power station in the late '70's. A friend of mine was working for Schuberts, the woodworking agents, and told me about a vacancy for a service engineer. I was about 30 years old, and to tell you the truth I fancied a change – and the job meant there would be a fair amount of travel, which was quite appealing for someone based at Drax every day. So I joined Schuberts, and in my five years there installed and serviced a good deal of machinery in a wide range of factories – places like Hygena, Project, President and DAMS. Of all of them, office furniture appealed the most to me, and I could see that the companies were obviously successful. That time at Schuberts gave me a really good insight into office furniture manufacturing; I was starting to think that I could get into making furniture when Schuberts' business folded.





▶▶▶▶▶ 'Well, said John cautiously, 'you should phone Trevor Peake and ask him. I think he'll tell you about service.'

After a little prompting, John expanded a little more about what he meant. 'Right at the beginning, when we just had an entry level desk which wasn't particularly exceptional, it was about quality and service. About not letting people down. We added to the range and grew (moving several times) but our view today is the same as it always has been – it's about providing a very good service and quality product for our customers. That includes a lot of different things of course. For example, we've always developed new ranges so that we can offer a good range of choice appropriate to what our customers need. And of course we've always invested heavily in machinery –

what customers get from that is precision driven quality and speed of production. We're extremely quick; we've got a big portfolio of which the vast majority is delivered in seven days. We bought the freehold of the Clerkenwell showroom because the feedback was that our customers wanted to be able to look at our products in London. As I said, it's all about quality and service.'

Our conversation turned to further growth and prospects for the future.

'Based on what's happened in the economy over the past couple of years, it's sensible to be cautious but we're quite optimistic moving forward, and plan to continue growing year on year. In particular, we see particularly good prospects for us in London as we grow our





presence in the capital. As for export, we see South Africa as having good potential, we're working on the Middle East and we're definitely going to exhibit at Orgatec again. We actually got a lot of good leads when we were in Cologne in 2008, and of course many of our dealers visit the Messe.'

And of course service has to be backed up with hard work. 'Yes, I'm definitely a workaholic – I always have been,' admits John, 'and I haven't even thought about retiring. I play a bit of golf, and squash every week...and I even enjoy the cruises that we started going on five years ago. But I enjoy work – and sometimes I pinch myself when I think about what we've achieved. I never planned this growth – it just happened!'

