

David Moore, md of Moore by Design, isn't sitting back and riding out the recession. He's taken the bull by the horns and invested in a new showroom – page 29



The sky's the limit for Ankur Chopra, md of Urban Interior. After opening a second floor in his London showroom, it's a case of two down, four to go – page 55



Being able to innovate and give the market what it wants isn't rocket science, but it's proved a successful formula for Burbidge, says md Ben Burbidge – page 66



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Loss of faith in William Ball ends in liquidation

Debt-ridden kitchen manufacturer William Ball has folded after failing to meet the terms of an agreement which protected it from creditors owed £1.6m. It was officially liquidated on 26 August at a special creditors' meeting.

The Essex-based family business entered a Company Voluntary Arrangement at the end of June, pledging to pay at least £10,000 a month back to creditors. But it failed to make the first payment in July, in part due to cashflow problems caused by its biggest customer taking business elsewhere and its finance company withdrawing its support.

The manufacturer hit the headlines in June after ousting its md, Terry Ball, in a round of cost-saving redundancies that cut staff from 163 to 113. When it entered the CVA, acting ceo Anthony Pratt said the job cuts, together with the closure of a factory, would help put the business back in profit by the end of 2011.

But that was before unsettled customers voted with their feet and sought other suppliers. Peterborough-based Premier Kitchens – with nine showrooms across seven counties – has sold William Ball kitchens for 19 years, growing to take 20% of the manufacturer's annual output, worth around £1.8m.

"We began asking questions when the accounts weren't filed on time," says md Iain

Forsythe. He says a business plan produced by William Ball management was 'seriously flawed', predicting 20% growth from an expanded retail operation. "We felt we were being asked to go to the cliff face with them – so we hastily re-acquainted ourselves with other suppliers. We felt we would rather spread the load this time," he says.

With close on 200 displays to change, Forsythe says the impact of the move was "massive" and cost the business more than £200,000.

Forsythe says he had no problem selling WB kitchens, but never sold the 2004-launched, own-branded kitchens.

"When you've got those sort of losses it's the directors' responsibility to set the business on a level footing," says Forsythe. "The redundancies they made went some way towards that, but it was too late."

Four wholly-owned retail outlets have closed, while six independently-run William Ball 'branded partner' outlets were all believed to be still up and running, having changed their names, like Mulberry, see panel left, and reverted to other suppliers.

Birmingham-based Mereway Kitchens has picked up around £200,000 worth of William Ball business from Total Kitchens in Essex and Tonbridge Kitchens Direct in Kent. The company is also in talks with another five former William Ball dealers.

Speaking after the liquidation, Pratt said: "By the time help was brought in, it proved to be too little, too late. In an industry that has a relatively high number of players with weak balance sheets and low profit margins this must serve as a lesson. If you're in trouble, swallow your pride and get help; and the earlier you do, the better."

STOP PRESS Could this be... the revival of MFI?

Two years after its collapse, flatpack kitchen brand MFI looks set to make a comeback! The rights to the MFI brand are reported to have been bought from the administrator for £250,000 by Shane and Jason Walker of the Walker Group – a North of England family plumbing business. The Walker Group website says: "The brand relaunch promises to be one of the most anticipated events in the UK retail calendar."



At Mulberry Homezones – trading as William Ball Exeter – company secretary Cary Burwood says it began looking for new suppliers when news of the company's problems first became public.

She had an email from the company one Friday to say deliveries were safe and all was well, but then received a tip-off to the contrary. "By the Monday we'd taken down the William Ball signs and were trading again as Mulberry"

Burwood says she lost six orders in the move and had just spent £4,000 on a William Ball-branded radio ad. Mulberry had been selling 10–15 William Ball kitchens a month but, like Premier, is now using several suppliers. "We're not going to put all our eggs in one basket again," she says.

Rising sales of home interest mags show consumers ready to improve

The lack of movement in the house market is proving to be a boon for the improve-not-move magazine sector. According to the latest ABC circulation figures, most of the major home interest magazines – which regularly feature kitchens and bathrooms – have put on sales in the six months to June this year.

As many homeowners decide not to move, the sector's rise of nearly 3% year-on-year is put down to readers searching for inspiration to decorate and improve their homes.

With overall sales in the UK consumer magazine market down by around 1.3m to just over 62m in the period compared with the six months to the end of 2009, the home interest sector is considered by industry analysts to be something of a star performer.

And that includes *The Essential Kitchen Bathroom Bedroom* magazine, ek&bbusiness' sister consumer title. Copy sales are said by distributor Comag to have grown by 33% since a relaunch earlier this year under editor Ronnie Whelan.



Music while you wash... Bossini's Aquavolo showerhead just got even sexier. A built-in audio system and four LED lights offering

chromotherapy are the ultimate hi-tech additions to the showerhead which delivers a tropical rain flow in the horizontal position and a waterfall effect when flipped vertically, as pictured – see page 43



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movers & shakers

Top gun

Shower enclosure manufacturer Aqualex has a new md following the appointment of Kevin Hill. With over 20 years' experience in the building products sector, Hill joins from door and window manufacturer John Fredericks, where he was also md.



Beko beckons



Beko has named Amanda Castle as its new marketing manager. Previously with the Porcelanosa Group, she will be responsible for developing and implementing marketing and advertising campaigns for its Beko, Leisure and Blomberg brands.

Jumping on board

Gemma Hewick is the new showroom manager at Samuel Heath's Design Centre Chelsea Harbour showroom. She joins the British brassware manufacturer from Ripples Newbury where she was a senior designer.



Cooking up a storm



Dutch built-in appliance manufacturer ATAG's latest recruit is Gary Davey, who joins as its new UK sales manager. Having previously worked for Whirlpool across its Maytag, Amana and KitchenAid brands, he has over 20 years' industry experience. In his new position he will be looking to increase sales throughout the UK.

Moving on up

Craig Baker is the new director marketing at Kohler Mira. He replaces Daniel Brohn who is the new vice president marketing for global faucets, based in Wisconsin. Since joining Mira in 1997, Baker has held numerous senior positions within the company, and since 2006 has been its director new product development.



Looking ahead



Bathroom and heating distributor BCG has added to its management team with the appointment of Andrew Lillywhite as commercial and operations director. He joins from competitor Waterline where he was logistics director. In his new position, he will focus on improving the customer experience across both retail and merchant accounts.

Experienced eye

David Brindley has joined the staff of the Bathroom Manufacturers Association. He has been in the bathroom industry for over 40 years, and has worked in all departments in sanitaryware manufacturing. Most recently he was technical manager at Armitage Shanks where he served on many technical committees.



Northern star



Shower tray manufacturer JT's five-strong sales team is now complete following the appointment of Caroline Schofield as its northern key accounts manager working across the north of England and Scotland. She has over 17 years' industry experience having spent 13 years with Mark Two Distribution and, more recently, four years with Heritage Bathrooms.

New challenge

Mark Heap has become the third new appointment in three months at Birmingham-based Jax Bathrooms. As production manager he will be responsible for re-organising factory systems and sourcing a new plant and equipment to meet growing demand. He has previously worked at Utopia Bathrooms and, more recently, with kitchen manufacturer XY Made.



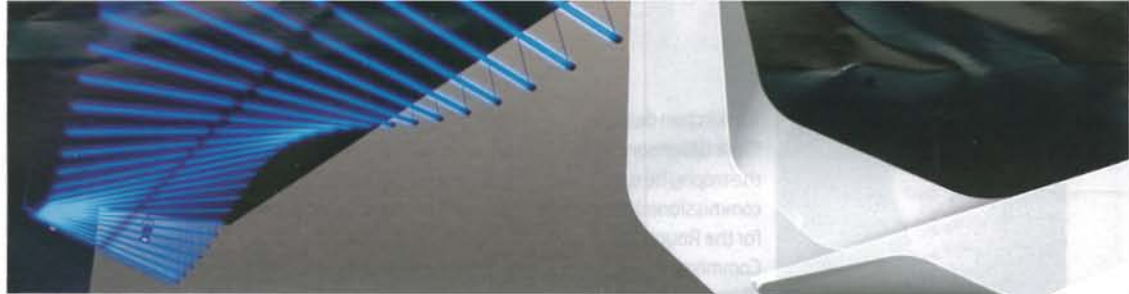
Directing sales



Jacuzzi UK has named Clive Minett as its new sales director. He has extensive board level sales and marketing experience, having held similar positions at Mira, Kohler and, most recently, Ideal Standard where he was marketing director. He will be working to grow Jacuzzi's core brands and ensure service levels are maintained.

Bright Sparkes

German kitchen manufacturer Beckermann Küchen has named Tom Sparkes as its new agent of the south of the UK with the aim of selecting six to 10 new Beckermann Showrooms of Excellence in the south. He has worked in kitchen design for over 20 years and with the Beckermann brand for over a decade.



THE WAVE

Roca

Continuing its trend for presenting unique and intriguing concepts at 100% Design, Roca will unveil The Wave, a 1.5m kinetic light installation consisting of 40 motor-controlled hanging rods with integrated LED lighting which will move in co-ordination with mirror ripples and waves. The bathroom manufacturer is also using the show to launch its fourth international design competition, Jump the Gap, in collaboration with the Barcelona Design Centre

ORA-ÏTO

Hi-Macs

Getting its worldwide preview at the show is the result of French designer Ora-ïto's collaboration with LG Hi-Macs. Showing just how versatile this acrylic solid surface material can be, the monolithic sculpture doubles up as a seat



QUADRO SYSTEM

Triflow

100% Design

London's Earls Court plays host to 100% Design from 23 - 26 September, where the hottest new products and concepts are all set to be served up. With over 350 exhibitors raring to go, this landmark design event continues to be the place to see future talent, especially with more companies using the show as a platform for their design competitions. Take Roca which is launching its Jump the Gap competition, or Electrolux and Triflow which will be unveiling the winner of their respective competitions on their stands. Here's a taster of what's to come

As well as unveiling its new Quadro System, a four-way water delivery system providing warm, cold, filtered and hot 98°C water through one spout, brassware manufacturer Triflow will also be using 100% Design as a platform for its second Future Talents competition. The Quadro System comes in a range of new designs, but will also be available in existing taps, including its award-winning Zaha Hadid version.

Also being launched is the Triflask, a reusable and non-carcinogenic plastic drinking flask which supports its Back to Tap campaign encouraging consumers to drink tap rather than bottled water

ROMANOV

Aestus

After an absence last year, Aestus will be returning to 100% Design with a number of new radiators. Looking more like works of art, the Chagall, Medicio and Romanov, pictured, from its designer Hotech collection will be on show for the first time in the UK, alongside a number of stone radiators from its Cinier collection



PETALS

Sylmar Technology

Making its debut on Sylmar Technology's stand will be new additions to its Avonite solid surface material. The company will be showing four new decors from its recently launched Recycled range as well as its new Petals collection which is available in Cirrus, Neptune, pictured, and Sirocco



corian



INSIDE AND OUT

DuPont Corian

London-based designers Kiwi&Pom will be using DuPont's Corian to explore the concept Inside and Out. Looking at the idea of the garden room, their installation will see the composite material clad the interior and exterior of the walls, as well as being used for furniture

GLINK

Philip Watts Design

Returning to 100% Design, Nottingham-based Philip Watts Design is set to brighten up the show with the rainbow-coloured Glink basin, a sister product to its popular glow-in-the-dark Gloop urinal. Made from polyethylene, it's available in nine colours



CAMPANAS

Cosentino

Cosentino will be using the show to present Campanas, an artistic interpretation of its ECO by Cosentino range. Designed by Estudio Campana, the concept uses layers of the decorative surface, which is made from 75% recycled materials, to recreate the look of rock sediments