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Made in Britain: Mark Vitow rebrands for the future

HPM Homegrown sponsor **Mark Vitow** Ltd represents leading brands in the marketplace including **ADEY, Fernox, FloPlast, Hep20** and many others. The family-owned national distributor recently launched a new manufacturing division with specific emphasis on British made products where possible, explains Commercial Director **James Cranham**.

How will MV Manufacturing help plumbers and heating engineers source the goods they need?

MV Manufacturing was created to focus on the brands made exclusively by Mark Vitow whilst also manufacturing new high-quality products under the strong MV brand.

Many installers will be familiar with some of the Mark Vitow own brands, including Black Swan PVC cement, FlushDaddy cistern spares, FlowPro macerators and Korona toilet seats.

The creation of the MV Manufacturing Division is a key element to growing these established MV brands and developing new product ranges – with specific focus on manufacturing in the UK wherever possible.

How local will the manufacturing of these goods be?

MV have long established UK manufacturing partners already producing numerous product lines. We’ve also proactively sourced new OEM partners to manufacture several consumable products - MV250 PLUS Jointing Compound being an example of this. After identifying there was a long term shortage of the market leading product, MV Manufacturing was able to release MV250 PLUS to a very eager market. It’s a great example of why supply chain efficiency is a factor in selecting which products to develop.

It’s essentially a process of identifying which products can be sourced at home competitively. We then evaluate the potential OEM partners and develop a manufacturing and marketing plan in preparation for product launches. The onus is on the quality of the product as the key driver - competitively priced, high-quality products made in the UK. What’s not to like?

How else does Mark Vitow help the trade to buy British?

We have always been advocates of UK-sourced products where possible, but we

have not necessarily made it clear enough to our customers which products are sourced in the UK. We are now in the process of rebranding all UK-supplied products under visible and identifiable British-Made branding. It’s challenging looking for cost-effective, high-quality UK manufacturers, but it’s incredibly exciting to focus on and develop products made in Britain.

As a business that has imported goods historically we are all too aware of the supply chain and freight issues, long lead times and increasing raw material and freight costs. Sourcing products in the UK brings many benefits to us and to our customers – reducing lead times, increasing stock levels and giving our customers a more reliable service.

Building relationships with suppliers is fundamental to MV’s business model - working with and supporting UK businesses is critical to that.

What challenges did Mark Vitow face during the pandemic?

The challenges we faced centered around ensuring we could stay open to support our customers on a next day service with critical plumbing and heating products – those who were able to remain open.

We’re proud that we were able to

remain open and trade safely throughout the pandemic. In just a few days we had the whole team set up to work from home and we didn’t close for a single day. We used it as an opportunity to increase our stock levels and improve efficiency including a big investment in order processing software and the launch of a new online portal where customers can place orders and manage their trade accounts online 24/7. We’ve had a lot of positive customer feedback in relation to supporting their businesses in difficult times.

First and foremost we are here to serve our customers and to deliver key brands and “bread and butter” plumbing and heating items available for them next day. I think customers value this more than ever and use us a key cog in their supply chain which enables them to carry less stock, whilst maintaining high availability.

Do you see the current high demand for goods continuing?

It’s been an incredible, unprecedented, sustained period of growth for the wider sector in general. Demand has been at an all-time high, with product shortages and increased purchasing costs also at record levels. There’s been a lot of pent up demand generated from the lockdowns, with the homeowner reevaluating spending priorities. I think this will potentially return back to more pre-pandemic levels and the market will continue to grow – just at a slower rate than what we’ve seen in the last 18 months!

What’s next for Mark Vitow?

We at Mark Vitow are incredibly proud of what we have achieved in recent years. Not only have we become a prominent go-to distributor to the Independent market of high profile UK brands, we have also stuck to our principles of innovation – sourcing and manufacturing high quality products under the MV brands. We are looking forward to launching more products sourced in the UK in the near future.

