

VIEWPOINT

I used to shadow my father – now he shadows me

Continuing her monthly series, Natalie Peters of Kitchens Etc in Norfolk, describes her experiences during the second year of her Foundation Degree in kitchen design at Bucks New University



IT'S BEEN another manic month at work, college and home. I have just received the results of my big marketing assignment and am thrilled to have received another first. Marketing was a topic I knew very little about and the course has given me a great many useful tools.

I am now on the final marketing module, which is a pairs presentation with one of my fellow students. One of us is to research the lower end of the kitchen market, the other the top. I have chosen Ikea, as it's very different from the bespoke work we do in our business.

At the next residential, we all present and sell the benefits of our chosen company. This will be a valuable learning exercise because, as retailers, we can be guilty of not looking outside our own four walls.

Work has been non-stop with lots of enquiries and big jobs in progress and upcoming. I am more involved on

the design side now as a result of the course, going out on surveys and meeting clients. I always used to shadow my father, but now I am taking the lead on designing some kitchen jobs and it's him that is shadowing me. Planning how to hand a business down from one generation to the next is always a big challenge for retailers like us, but this course is helping with that.

I've also been busy organising new showroom displays, which are now starting to be installed and I'm excited to see them come together with all the finishing touches. And, somewhere in all this, I've had my interview for the Mayor's Business Awards Employee of the Year category.

We've also just taken on CompuSoft Winner as our new CAD package and I'm experimenting with this before I go on their training. We never had CAD before in the business and this decision has directly come from expanding my design skills and approach. We are still going to use traditional methods, too.

I often get asked about my work/life/study balance. I have to say it's been quite a challenge of late, but not unmanageable. As we're so busy at work, I've had to forgo my study day each week and have been working late most nights and weekends to keep on top of everything. My two daughters are settled and getting on great at school, but it's important to me that I give them time to help with their schoolwork and not affect their progress.

So, every day at home time is now a regimented act of juggling two lots of reading books and practising spellings ready for the test every Monday.

It is definitely having a positive effect with them seeing me studying – they feel very important and grown-up doing their homework, just like mummy. My five-year-old has even taken to wearing her sunglasses to mimic my glasses, pretending she can't read without them.

• Natalie is being sponsored by sinks, taps, appliances and work surfaces supplier Franke

Charlie Smallbone to launch Ledbury Studio in London

CHARLIE SMALLBONE, founder of the famous Smallbone of Devizes brand, has announced he is to launch a new showroom venture, called Ledbury Studio.

Located in Ledbury Mews in London's Notting Hill, the new showroom is due to open its doors in April.

Smallbone has had an illustrious 40-year career in kitchen design, and he says this latest venture is intended to "harness the beauty of original materials while creating practical kitchens that exude style and elegance".

Said Smallbone of his new venture: "During my career, kitchens have evolved exponentially, but we still strive for the same qualities of function and for the best quality of life. My designs for Ledbury Studio are all about smooth functionality with an emphasis on space to cook, live and entertain."

The new studio is in fact not far from the very first Smallbone of Devizes studio, which he opened back in 1981. Of course, these days he has no involvement in Smallbone of Devizes

The new showroom will showcase Smallbone's new Metallics Collection (pictured). This kitchen is said to have evolved

from the kitchen that Smallbone created for the Chelsea Flower Show last year as part of a collaboration with deVOL kitchens. It is described as taking "traditional design details like delicate Georgian-style cock-bead, married with contemporary details, such as minimal brass door frames, creating a unique look that is different to anything else".

Smallbone was also recently involved in the Rock and Bone business – an interior design collective that made furniture and joinery. But he is now phasing out his involvement in that venture to concentrate on Ledbury.

Smallbone is also on the judging panel for the kbbreview Retail & Design Awards 2019.

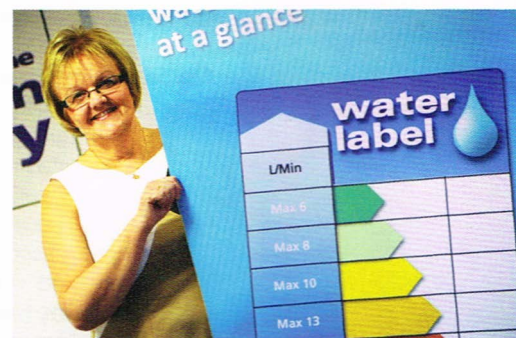


Bathroom industry has two years to comply with EU unified water label

BATHROOM PRODUCT manufacturers selling into the European Union (EU) have two years to comply with the criteria of the Unified Water Label (UWL) after the European Commission gave its support for the industry to work towards the single labelling standard.

Industry trade body, the BMA, said this was "a significant advancement" for the industry but "the real work starts now".

Currently, 60% of manufacturers selling into the EU are compliant with the criteria of the label, which has been put together by the industry, but a key requirement of the UWL is that 80% of the market must be using the label for it to be formally accepted in Brussels.



Hansgrohe UK MD Martin Mongan to step down

HANSGROHE HAS announced that its UK managing director Martin Mongan will step down at the end of March.

He will be replaced by the firm's UK sales manager, Jay Phillips, from April 1.

The German tap firm said Mongan (pictured) will take up a new role outside the bathroom industry.

Phillips said: "Hansgrohe UK is indebted to Martin for his contribution and leadership.

We will work closely over the next two months during a smooth transition to ensure our clear strategy to strengthen and grow the business for both brands is realised."



BA Components director David Caulfield dies

DAVID CAULFIELD, BA Components sales and marketing director, has passed away after a short illness.



BA said: "It is with great sadness we announce that David Caulfield, our sales and marketing director passed away this morning after a short illness.

"David was a passionate advocate for life, he was talented with great business vision and was highly respected in the KBB industry.

"His contribution to BA for over 12 years cannot be underestimated locally, nationally and internationally. For those who met him personally, he was an unbelievable force with a vivid personality to match."