

Building the Dream



Malcolm Ward knows a thing or two about construction. He also knows a good deal about service. It is those combined insights that are driving the growth of his new business Exemplar Projects, a project management services company.

"Exemplar Project's role is really to help clients achieve their vision," he says. "In many instances, developers know what they want to end up with, but they are not entirely sure what the process looks like. Our job is to guide them through that and help them avoid the pitfalls."

Having recently left the world of corporate construction – he was previously an Area Director for Rok Building Ltd – Malcolm believes Exemplar Projects is uniquely placed to offer contractors and developers a range of personal, flexible and quality services.

From viability assessments, to recruiting design teams, cost planning and design and construction management, the company offers a full range of services to all construction industry sectors. "Because we are small, we can provide a very flexible solution to deliver a range of successful projects. And we always put quality first," Malcolm says.

Malcolm honed his commitment to delivering projects on time and on budget at Rok where he set up and managed the £35m turnover Crawley office until last year. "There are lots of people in the construction industry who don't truly understand the meaning of service. I do and that is fundamental to what Exemplar Projects is all about."

The workflow is above projections for the business's first year. Current projects include design and construction management for a 26 unit retirement home development in Eastbourne and a range of development management services for a townhouse scheme in Orpington.

Exemplar is also involved in projects nationwide, but Malcolm is keen to focus on the buoyant southeast which he believes will continue to generate opportunities for smaller businesses as the Olympic effect takes hold and draws in the major players.

Going forward he would like to see another three consultants in the business within the next couple of years, but he has no intention of growing the firm into a multi-million pound practice. "We will always be a smallish practice and will prosper by listening to our customers and providing flexible services that deliver to their needs. We will grow the business based on a reputation of excellent service and personal advice," he says.

The creation of Exemplar Projects is a personal ambition achieved, but not without a great deal of thought and, critically, the backing of his wife and children. "You can have all the confidence in the world in a corporate environment with its support mechanisms, but translating that into your own business is daunting. Going from the safety net of a monthly salary to sole responsibility for generating your own income, there are always questions. I really needed my family behind me to do it."

There are many challenges in setting up and managing a new business. Selecting the right opportunities and not falling into the trap of taking on everything that comes along is key and dealing with unfamiliar "back of house" activities such as accounts and IT also presents a steep learning curve. "Keeping everything in balance and finding time for all the different elements of life, both in the business and at home, has meant a hectic schedule. Learning how to juggle it all is part of the attraction and I'm enjoying it," Malcolm says.

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For further information: visit www.exemplarprojects.com,
e-mail malcolm.ward@exemplarprojects.com
or call Malcolm Ward on 01444 240126 or 07872 449542.