

Lister Trade Frames of Stoke on Trent is now in its 35th year of trading. A culture of constant change led to the new aluminium division, explains Managing Director Mark Warren

## Enter Elitis aluminium

Lister Trade Frames of Stoke on Trent is now in its 35th year of trading and while they have not been immune to the past few years of economic downturn they have weathered the recession with remarkable competency. 2010 actually saw them claim growth of 17.5 percent with an increase in profit of some 21 percent. So what is helping this long established fabricator to succeed in such a difficult market?

Although Listers were established back in 1976, it wasn't until the late 1990s that they started to expand the business using a focused approach to trade supply and made some serious investments in new manufacturing premises and machinery along with a more proactive approach to growth.

In 2004 they launched their 'Elitis' branded window and door range. This marked the beginning of further growth for the business as Listers developed a consistent and long-term marketing campaign to ensure that their customers were well supported and supplied with every sales aid that would help them to give a professional presentation.

From that point on Listers continued to invest and develop their brand, constantly adding new products and options and embracing new regulations and standards as opportunities rather than hindrances.

2005 saw them named Fabricator of the Year at the G Awards. In 2006 they achieved what is believed to be the first domestic 'A' rated window installation, well before most fabricators had even started to think about Window Energy Ratings. They have continued



Top left: Red aluminium frames in production. Top right: Paul Manning and customers with one of Listers' first alu doors. Bottom: L-R: Paul Manning (Aluminium Specification Manager) and Alan Howley (Aluminium Production Manager) with the new CNC machine

to enjoy a string of awards and industry firsts right up to the present day. 2010 saw Listers once again voted Fabricator of the Year.

Mark Warren, Listers Managing Director, says "It is the culture of constant change that keeps driving the business forward. Staying ahead requires change. Change is good. The trick is to get everyone in the business to believe that!"

### Aluminium division

One area of recent diversification or change for Listers has been their launch into aluminium window and door manufacture. This example demonstrates that while Listers likes 'change',

they are still very careful to avoid unnecessary and unwanted setbacks.

They originally recognised an opportunity to introduce an aluminium range over two years ago. PVC-U frame manufacture was becoming tougher with tighter margins along with more competition in a shrinking market. Diversification was the buzzword of the time, but while some fabricators decided that they would try their hand at fitted kitchens, solar panels or driveways, Listers chose something more closely related to their core business.

Darren Pusey, Listers Production Director was given the task to gather the information,

make visits, assess what staff and machinery would be required, what software, systems, tooling, floor space, and monetary investment would be necessary. That process took some 12 months before the decision was taken and the first frames started to be manufactured.

So while Listers seem to enjoy change and relish leading the field, they aren't foolhardy in their new ventures. This is probably why they are considered such a well established and professional business; in fact it is probably the reason why they are also still enjoying good financial returns despite the recession.

Listers' Elitis Aluminium windows and doors are now growing steadily and providing them with a new income stream. They have gained new customers and they have converted some of their PVC-U customers into aluminium customers. They now have an Aluminium Specification Manager and a skilled production team. Most recently they have invested in a new Elumatec CNC Profile machining centre to help them to stay ahead of demand. So it would seem that taking the time to fully investigate this market is paying dividends.

Lister Trade Frames have pulled off some winning results over the years and while their approach may look a little frenetic at times it's obvious that their basic approach is 'steady as she goes' coupled with a lot of added enthusiasm for success. So what about this coming year? Mark says "Business as usual. Just wait and see!"

**Enquiries:** Tel. 01782 391900, [www.listerf.co.uk](http://www.listerf.co.uk)