

### Case Study: **Fairfield Displays & Lighting Ltd**

#### The Company

Based in the West Midlands, Fairfield Displays manufacture suspended displays based on cable/rod systems, widely used by estate agents for window property displays. Other products include free standing information systems, graphic displays, digital displays, product shelving systems and lighting systems.

#### The Challenge

Fairfield Displays wanted to extend and improve its product range to achieve its aim of growth through increased sales and customer satisfaction. The company lacked a strategic design policy and had invested little in new product development. Intensive competition had made price and costing significant issues. To gain a competitive advantage, the company recognised that it must establish a professional design capability, develop a strategic design policy and produce innovative new products.

Identifying emerging trends in UK and overseas markets and building the capability to react speedily to developments were key. All 2D and 3D CAD skills needed to be enhanced to generate high quality visuals that would help boost sales. The company needed to develop purpose-built, easy to install products, improve manufacturing techniques and implement faster lead times using robust materials.



Jason Fernandes

#### The Solution

In partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, Fairfield Displays set up a highly successful KTP project. Jason Fernandes, a graduate with a first class honours degree in Product Design, joined the company under the scheme.

Initially focusing on the development of innovative products for the estate agent and banking markets, the development of the design strategy was adapted quickly less than a year later following the downturn in the housing market and the global recession.

Jason's objectives were to create innovative products that would differentiate the company from its competitors and also improve and update existing product ranges. Undertaking market research to ascertain customers' needs, market trends and future opportunities, Jason also

identified the most suitable 3D CAD package for generation of high quality visuals.

In a close working relationship with the University, Jason drafted and implemented a design strategy that followed a detailed process from idea conception to final manufacture and sale, utilising and reviewing the best manufacturing technologies and techniques to ensure continuous improvement and quality assurance.

## The Results

Fairfield Displays has embedded a culture of innovation within the company. New products have been introduced and existing ranges improved, new markets opened up, major clients retained and new ones attracted, resulting in an increase of £350,000 worth of annual sales turnover.

The ability to provide a responsive, high quality design service generating high quality visuals in short timescales has improved client relationships and contributed to business growth. Jason also used the photo-realistic visuals he was able to

produce from the CAD software to develop a promotional brochure for the first new product range.

As a result of the KTP programme, Fairfield Design has been introduced to the Design Council, facilitating further improvement of design capabilities within the company.

The investigation and introduction of environmentally-friendly materials has revealed the potential for a new range of “green” displays for a new market sector.

## The Benefits

For the company:

*“The KTP project has helped Fairfield Displays to create and encourage a culture of innovation within the company, improved its awareness of and response to customer needs and market trends and streamlined the process of introducing new products. We have raised the profile of the company in the eyes of its clients and the new skills and knowledge acquired will benefit the company for years to come.”*

*Nigel Fletcher  
Managing Director  
Fairfield Displays & Lighting Ltd*

For the associate:

*“I have learnt a lot from the project. Changes after the first year gave me the opportunity to work on more challenging projects, to network with major clients, suppliers and individuals within the industry, and access premier exhibitions in the display, product design and interior design fields. I was able to design the exhibition stand for the company at Sign & Digital UK 2009, giving a radical new look to the company’s brand identity. The CAD and KTP training modules have offered me the experience that would not have been achieved with any other standard work experience.”*

*Jason Fernandes  
KTP Associate*

For the academic partner:

*“Curriculum development has been informed by developments in product design visualisation techniques. Further research needs have been identified to develop strategic design solutions to support small and medium-sized companies in a changing global economy. Practical, illustrative case study material has been generated that is applicable to a number of study modules. The company has also supported the University with its annual Graduate Design exhibition and at the New Designers exhibition in London in 2008 and 2009.”*

*David Henley  
Senior Lecturer  
School of Art & Design  
University of Wolverhampton*

**Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are designed to benefit everyone involved.**

**For further information**

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