



'Mertex will help us to be almost as important to our customers as they are to us'

A company where the Prince of Wales and Liam Gallagher rub tweed-clad shoulders in a 'hall of fame' is using Mertex to develop the opportunities presented by a changing marketplace.

The presence of this 'odd couple' in the picture gallery at Abraham Moon Ltd, West Yorkshire woolen millers since 1837 in the town of Guiseley, UK, indicates how versatile tweed has moved from being the fabric of choice for the aristocracy and landed gentry to a cloth for all.

This long history encompasses the rise and fall of the UK textile industry and now signs of better times ahead for the survivors.

In the 1980s and 90s, cut-price competition from Europe and the Far East undermined the industry and forced most remaining mills to close.

Abraham Moon faced its greatest challenge from subsidised Chinese imports.

Not being able to compete on price, the firm promoted its quality and heritage instead with a strong focus on design and bespoke products.

And further impetus came when labor costs rose in China and government subsidies ended, lessening the price difference.

"We've been able to get the business back and we now have around 230 staff, more than we've had for many years, in fact we are the biggest employer here," says managing director John Walsh, who is a firm believer in the importance of attracting more young people into manufacturing.

It is an opportune time to start using the market leading Mertex product with its focus purely on the management and control of cloth and fabric.

The recovery has seen Abraham Moon become one of the prime movers in tweed for upholstery and soft furnishings, with its wool interior fabrics reaching as far as the White House.

"For many customers this look is right for them and always will be," John Walsh explains. "If you have a certain type of hotel or country house you would always appreciate it.

"We've always produced fabrics for clothing, but I strongly believed that if people love the

clothing they would love to have it in their homes. I went to interior designers and sold them the idea.

"We take pride in our fabrics being used to make clothes for life and they also offer great longevity for interiors."

Modern day customers include the likes of Ralph Lauren, Dolce and Gabbana, John Lewis, Burberry, Prada, Barbour and Boden. You can buy clothes, Bronte brand cushions and throws and much more at Harrods, the Highgrove Shop at Tetbury and at the Abraham Moon lifestyle shop at The Courtyard, near Settle, North Yorkshire, UK.

The company runs one of the few vertically integrated mills in Great Britain where all processes that turn fleeces into beautiful fabrics are carried out in-house.

This is where Reflex Data Systems enters the story with its Mertex software that is exclusively tailored to meet the needs of the industry.

Relying on a 20-year-old system from another software company that had seen its day, →

ABRAHAM MOON LTD CASE STUDY

Abraham Moon needed a system to match the business's aspirations, one that was user friendly, adaptable and strong on sales and marketing as well as the management of cloth, of which 30,000 meters a week comes off the looms.

"Whilst we are manufacturers, we are very much sales and marketers as well," says John Walsh. "In the past, we had a few big customers, but these days we are in such a big marketplace that we also have a large number of small customers.

"After the first six months with the Mertex manufacturing module, we still have to feel the full benefits, but there are absolutely no regrets about taking it on.

"You enter these arrangements with a certain amount of trepidation after hearing stories from the industry of total new systems that have had a hugely detrimental effect.

"We did our due diligence and went to Lochcarron, which is an experienced Mertex user. This is a far less paranoid industry than it used to be. Competitors are open with each other and there is a willingness to share knowledge."

He says that by enabling full integration with all departments plus its reporting facility, Mertex is producing vast amounts of useful data.

"Reflex Analytics will tell us about our customers, how we can interpret their buying patterns and give us the ability to help them.

"We want to be the best supplier to customers. Where we have the best relationships we are almost as important to them as they are to us, such as giving them a helping hand with inventory management."

Reflex's knowledge of the textile industry and ability to tailor the software to meet the needs of a vertical woolen mill business were key factors in winning the firm's confidence.

Quality manager, Scott Cooper, said: "When we talk about warp and weft, they know what we mean.

"We have complex processes and to find a system that works is difficult, so there are always a few things to iron out.

"I've worked with Reflex before at a previous company and I've always found them to be responsive, professional and understanding about what we are trying to achieve."



Meanwhile, in the mill, Abraham Moon's 'best weaving set in the country' is in action with 32 'Rolls-Royce' looms from Germany clattering away.

This is the scene of scouring and carding, dyeing and blending the fibers, then spinning, winding and weaving and finally laundering the fabric in giant washing machines using pure borehole water. A recent visitor wrote that the mill provided a jaw dropping and a truly wondrous sensory experience.

The finished cloth is full of interest. It has depth and richness and even in a piece of gray cloth, you can pick out many different colors when you look closely.

The group of Yorkshire stone buildings where all of this happens sits inconspicuously in the small town of Guiseley, which a National Census revealed as statistically the most average place in England and Wales.

But Abraham Moon doesn't do average, just the very exceptional.

About Reflex Data

Reflex Data is an established supplier of ERP software and services to the textile and fabrics industry, with a track record of ensuring customers get the best return from their investment. Established in 1987, the company is the developer of the market leading software Mertex which looks after all customers' needs including: the manufacture or purchase of greige cloth; barcoded inventory management; warehouse picking and control; financial accounting and sales order processing. Mertex also has the latest in business analytics and iPad technology. Reflex Data has huge industry knowledge and a worldwide customer base.

About Abraham Moon

Founded in 1837 and with their roots in apparel, they are one of the last remaining vertical woolen mills in Great Britain, with a reputation for consistent quality and innovative design.