



Designing Demand | Case Study | Amarestone

Stone suppliers re-brand designed to target priority markets

Background

Steve and Denise Turner launched Amarestone in 2006 to provide natural stone from Europe and other quarries around the world for home interior design projects, together with customer service that is second to none.

The challenge

After 18 months Steve and Denise recognised that in order to grow their business in a crowded marketplace they needed to differentiate themselves from their competitors, some of which are much larger companies.

The response

Having identified interior designers and serial small-scale developers, with average project values of £20,000-plus, as their new priority target markets they needed to find a way of conveying the quality of their products and service. This requirement for a strong, clearly-defined brand identity resulted in a complete overhaul of all Amarestone's corporate literature and marketing materials.

The outcome

With the design project nearly at an end the company is confident of its ability to attract the target of high-end customers thanks to the 'personal shopper' concept that is conveyed in the re-designed marketing materials. Turnover is expected to more than double within three years.

“This has been a very worthwhile project for us, it was very important for us to get it right and we wouldn't have been able to do it without Designing Demand.”

‘Objective third party input was crucial to finding solutions’

When Steve and Denise Turner launched Amarestone in March 2006 they aimed to offer the finest natural stone from Europe and other parts of the world for home interior design projects, combined with superior customer service.

The Berkshire-based company supplies a wide range of natural stone floor and wall tiles, mosaics, borders, dados and pencils, kitchen work surfaces and vanity tops, window ledges, sinks and baths, as well as garden items such as table tops, water features and fountains.

Their experience of sourcing overseas suppliers enables the couple to provide an attractive, sensibly-priced package, which is backed up with expert, down-to-earth advice.

Although business was good, after 18 months of trading the couple realised that in trying to be all things to all people they were hampering their chances of growing the company.

“We decided that we needed to concentrate on projects with a value of £20,000 or above,” said Denise. “While smaller projects require just as much effort to complete, the profitability is much lower. With this in mind we knew we needed to do something about our branding and our corporate image but we didn’t know where to start.”

By a fortunate coincidence, Denise was invited to attend a Designing Demand workshop to learn about the programme developed by the Design Council, funded by SEEDA and delivered by Business Link. In addition to helping businesses realise the potential of design to drive competitiveness and improve performance, the programme also provides solutions for design in product, brand, and business processes.

At the seminar, Denise realised that design could be the key to changing the perception of Amarestone so she and Steve signed up for the Designing Demand Generate programme.

“Discussions with our assigned design associate, Ian Ferris, enabled us to ascertain where we were, where we wanted to be and, crucially, how to get there,” said Denise.

“Taking part in the Designing Demand programme helped us to focus on our priority customers, which we identified as interior designers and serial, small-scale property developers, and to create a brand that has a clear proposition, distinctively articulated. Part of this was to imbue the brand with a ‘personal shopper’ concept to underline the customer service aspect of our offer.”

“Getting this expert help from an objective third party was crucial to identifying the problems we faced and then finding the solution. The programme was not only interesting and rewarding but also most enjoyable.”

With the design brief being to strengthen the brand and focus on particular segments of the market, the result has been a refreshed logo, a revised website with a digital brochure that can be accessed online, new printed material and, for a recent exhibition, a stylish range of post-cards, posters and pull-up displays. A marketing plan is also being mapped out to ensure that Amarestone focuses on the right targets.

“Designing Demand has been the driving force behind our changes,” said Denise. “At times of economic downturn in particular, it is more important than ever to be properly attuned to your marketplace.”

Design associate Ian Ferris, who worked with the Turners to transform the marketing offer, said: “Steve and Denise recognised that they could become a powerful brand by using design to focus and articulate their proposition in clear and distinctive terms. They realised that this would help develop a compelling customer experience and clarify their own sense of purpose.”

“This will enable them to capture high net value projects and so compete effectively with larger companies. They will accomplish this simply by doing what they already do well, even better, and by using design thinking to articulate and convey their proposition.”

Jackie Walker, regional programme manager at Business Link for Designing Demand in the South East, said the projected increase in turnover demonstrated the potential strength of the revised offer.

“Amarestone is confident of increasing its current turnover of £100,000 to £130,000 to around £300,000 within three years. For a small business that was operating in a crowded marketplace alongside a wide range of competitors, mostly functioning on an undifferentiated basis, this has clearly been a remarkable project.”

AMARESTONE 
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