

brand BUILDING

One thing the hair industry is known for is its addictive personality – once you're in it it's very difficult to leave. That's why there are so many fantastic hairdressers out there with decades under their belt, but it's not just the hairdressers, salon furniture distributor LSE is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. We caught up with the company's co-director Wendy Droznika to see how the brand has evolved over the past three decades.



In all honesty, our exclusive brands have proven themselves as they have such a good reputation. Once a hairdresser has experienced using high quality furniture they want it again. We've always known that seeing, feeling and trying the furniture is key, which is why our showroom has always been so important and ultimately is one of our unique selling points. It's a welcoming, relaxed environment where customers are free to spend time, ask questions and gather important facts and information.

HOW DID YOU FEEL WHEN SETTING UP LSE?

It was a calculated leap of faith. The concept of Italian hairdressing furniture was just entering the marketplace and we had the strong feeling that the hairdressing industry was reinventing itself and we wanted to be part of that. We felt confident that it would be worthwhile to have a company that supplied mid to top end salon furniture to the industry. Plus we were steadfast in our belief that an excellent product together with professional, friendly service and advice from a family run firm would be beneficial.

WHAT DID YOU SET OUT TO DO?

Our aim was to establish a specialist salon furniture company where we would always have time for our customers, with no products just furniture. To this end we now have a client base that has effectively grown up with us. It pleases us no end how many customers are still with us 30 years later.

WHAT FURNITURE DO YOU SELL?

The superior brands we chose are headed up by Pietranera salon furniture, exclusive in the UK to LSE. Designed and manufactured since 1956, this range offers handmade furniture made in Italy to the highest standards of quality, style and reliability. To support this we also offer Takara Belmont, along with the established company REM.

WHAT OBSTACLES DID YOU FACE ALONG THE WAY?

LSE Ltd started off in Golders Green, London and pretty early on it became apparent that space would be an obstacle to us displaying the furniture we wanted to show. So we doubled our size by moving to our present location in Wembley, Middlesex. We then doubled our showroom, office and warehouse size again by purchasing the unit next door and knocking through to create one space that we still operate from today.

WHAT HAS CHANGED ABOUT THE COMPANY?

Without doubt the size of it. Over the years we've employed more staff and purchased more vehicles to make deliveries. We can also now supply and advise on designers and we have a Maintenance Department on site as well as an on call service engineer to help with any after sales queries. The use of computers and computer systems has also evolved hugely within our organisation and a large lcd screen in our showroom allows us to show customers products, etc. The size of our client base has grown steadily and considerably over the past 30 years, something we consciously work towards without overlooking the needs of our current customer list. Our salon furniture now ends up in places other than salons too. We supply exclusive private homes, cruise ships and private yachts, hotels and airport lounges along with television, theatre and more. It's quite amazing where and how our furniture is used.

HOW HAS THE INDUSTRY CHANGED?

When we first started out a lot of salon furniture was from the UK but unfortunately now a lot of those companies are no longer trading. Importing Pietranera Italian furniture was quite a

new concept back then but now salon furniture is being brought into the UK from all over the world. The hairdressing industry as a whole has become so much more professional and respected. Salons have without a doubt become so much more upmarket and we're now seeing the rise of what we call the super salon. These are typically double shops with over 20 positions, often incorporating spa treatments. They aim to be the number one salon in town and are always professionally managed.

HOW DO YOU THINK THE INTERNET HAS AFFECTED YOUR BUSINESS?

The internet phenomenon has given rise to many online companies, however if these are solely traded on the internet they have no showroom, which is a huge disadvantage.

HOW DID YOU MAKE YOUR BRAND STAND OUT?

In all honesty, our exclusive brands have proven themselves as they have such a good reputation. Once a hairdresser has experienced using high quality furniture they want it again. We've always known that seeing, feeling and trying the furniture is key, which is why our showroom has always been so important and ultimately is one of our unique selling points. It's a welcoming, relaxed environment where customers are free to spend time, ask questions and gather important facts and information. Having images of the salons we've supplied has always been a very helpful tool too and the many prized endorsements we have from our valued client base have been invaluable.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE CELEBRATING YOUR 30TH ANNIVERSARY?

It feels a real achievement and we're extremely honoured. Over the years we've faced different challenges, both good and bad, but have stood fast in our vision and belief of LSE and of the company we started when young and have grown 30 years older with. When we ask customers how they've heard of us and hear back "we've been personally recommended to you" that's still music to our ears. We're very lucky to still be part of an industry we love and believe that the LSE ethos of continual commitment to service has enabled us to constantly supply leading salons nationwide.

