

Director of the Month

Andrew Scott - MD Purplex Marketing



Each month Windows Active talks to an industry director. Here we talk to Andrew Scott, Managing Director, Purplex Marketing

The last year was unquestionably tough for the window industry, and 2012 isn't looking any better. But in every industry there are companies who buck the trend and achieve remarkable success and as a marketing and PR agency, our role at Purplex is to help clients stay ahead of the market and outperform competitors.

We don't take a "one size fits all" approach as every project and client is different, so we always start with a clean sheet. Some companies simply want more leads, so we'll develop an aggressive lead generation strategy, while other clients want a more strategic approach involving brand management or a new product launch so we'll pull in our consultancy and PR team.

Purplex has its roots in business consultancy and over the years we have developed some very specific tools to help our clients grow, such as the Business Growth Matrix. The success of this is evident to see with clients but also within our own business. It is very unusual to see a marketing agency invest in its own business but that's exactly what we've done and as a result we now employ more than 20 people across PR, creative, digital, market research and direct marketing.

This of course brings its own challenges. No business is immune to the economic downturn and as a large marketing agency we face the same business issues as other companies – rising costs, staff management, and cashflow. In late 2008 as recession

FACTS AND FIGURES:

First Job: Computer Programmer for a glass processing company in 1987.

When did you establish Purplex Marketing? I set up Purplex in 2004 after many years as a director of some major companies in the window industry, and we formed the Ascot Group in 2007.

Most useful/favourite gadget: While I couldn't live without my phone or laptop, my most useful gadget is my notepad. I scribble ideas, plans and concepts continuously and often refer back to them months or even years later.

Favourite/most useful website: Personally it's BBC News but I'm very excited about the new window industry portal, the Insight Index, which launches this month.

Business person you admire: Steve Jobs (Apple). Steve had the rare ability to see the bigger picture while obsessing over the smallest detail and his passion for innovation and marketing created one of the world's most successful companies.

Recommended hotel for business: I am on the road most weeks and prefer convenience and no frills, so it's typically a Premier Inn for me.

Favourite UK restaurant: The Teppanyaki Japanese restaurant off Broad Street in Birmingham is a firm favourite for social gatherings, but for something a bit special L'Escargot in London.

Advice for surviving the recession: Don't stand still and 'wait and see'. Controlling costs is essential, but without marketing and innovation companies die.

Other interests: Since childhood I've always been involved in martial arts and still enjoy competitive events, although these days more as a spectator rather than participant. I grew up in Belfast as part of a large family and I'm fortunate to have 5 brothers who are very entrepreneurial. We get together regularly and discuss family and business, and share ideas and resources. To me, family is very important.

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WORKING DAY:

Each day is different, but every morning at 8:30 I get the vital business stats. Sales leads, invoicing, banking, debtors.

Mondays are generally reserved for meetings with various divisional managers and later in the day we have a Client Review Meeting where 3 or 4 of our managers and creative team discuss 'momentum' and PR/marketing activity for our clients. This often continues late into the evening and typically involves a pizza delivery.

I think training has played an important role in our success over the years and Friday afternoons are always reserved for training and staff development. The rest of the week usually involves client meetings and working on client marketing strategies.

For me, the best time of the working week is late evening. I come alive after 11 and regularly work through until 2 or 3am.

gripped we responded with a new business plan which we called "the 3i's" - investment, improvement and innovation.

As other marketing agencies – and most businesses – cut back we did the opposite and invested in new technology, better people, and we broadened our range of services to create a genuine 'full service' marketing agency. Most marketing agencies outsource some of their work to third parties, such as graphic design, websites or direct marketing, we brought all of these services in-house and employed specialists in each area.

Although the risks were higher it meant we could offer a truly integrated marketing service and better value for our clients. Clients gain both the creative strategy and the 'teeth' to implement it all in-house, wrapped up with 20+ years experience in the glass and glazing industry.

A strong marketing presence

I think it is vital that companies have a strong marketing presence. People have short memories and you need to keep your business and brand active; it's no surprise that the most successful companies continue to market themselves relentlessly. Skeptics will maintain that successful companies like Apple, Coca Cola or Tesco can afford to invest in marketing - I would argue they are successful because they invested in marketing.

At Purplex we always recommend a multi-

channel marketing strategy. In today's fast-paced world people consume information continuously so it's important to engage with your audience in the most effective way for them. Results can be dramatic when you combine repetition with a mix of different marketing channels. We always put PR at the heart of marketing plans as I believe a company's brand and reputation is the foundation of any successful growth strategy.

In 2009 we launched Purplex Digital. We wanted to offer an in-house web design service, but it was important to expand our existing marketing and PR services online too. Creating a strong online presence and managing an online reputation is an absolute necessity in an internet-savvy and social-media world.

Over the last two years our digital division has grown considerably and we now employ a team of web designers, database developers and online marketing people. We've also provided extensive training to our in-house PR team as the style and content of online PR is different to traditional print media. Having these resources has given our clients a significant edge over competitors.

One of the headaches many companies face with developing a new website is lack of time to plan the design and produce the content. Because we understand the industry and the target audience we can often just get on with designing the website and writing the copy, and the client only needs to refine the details if required.

One of the big developments in marketing is video – from corporate videos to online video streaming, and we are looking closely at this opportunity at the moment.

The Year Ahead

With so much uncertainty in recent months it's no surprise that many companies are reluctant to push ahead in 2012. But sitting back to "wait and see" is not the answer.

David Cameron in his New Year speech pointed to a difficult economic year ahead but also suggested that in 2012 we "go for it". Whatever your political persuasion, given the alternatives, "going for it" is a good strategy. For Purplex we will continue our "3i's" approach of investment, improvement and innovation.

We've already committed to a significant recruitment plan this year including a graduate programme and apprenticeship scheme. Training has always been an

important part of our culture and we've stepped this up. We've brought in some top level consultants and advisers too, including a senior advertising expert from Saatchi and Saatchi and one of Europe's leading experts on search engine algorithms and web-based software.

One of the most exciting marketing projects we've worked on in the last few months is the Insight Index, the new search engine and product finder developed by Insight Data. It is a true marketing innovation and over the next year we think it will change the way people in the window industry find new products and suppliers.

I believe innovation is the key to kick-starting the window industry and there are already signs across the industry that this is starting to happen. We can see this in new glass products and new window systems being developed and launched. And when innovation meets marketing great things can happen.

Just consider the struggling company that posted losses year after year, culminating in a catastrophic failure in 1997 with \$1bn in losses. Despite desperate attempts to dispose of the company, there were no buyers. A new management with an obsession with innovation and marketing, starting with the iPod, transformed Apple into the dazzling technology company of today with more cash than the U.S. Government.

The window industry has always been entrepreneurial, but while legislation and new initiatives like the Green Deal will impact the industry, it is innovation and marketing that really drives it.

As a marketing agency Purplex will remain at the cutting edge of marketing innovation. We have the skills, knowledge and passion and as part of a larger group we have the resources behind us to help our clients stay ahead of the market and outperform competitors.

WORKING LOCATION:

We moved to a new purpose-designed, modern offices two years ago in Weston-super-Mare. The facilities include a market research centre, graphic design studio, various creative suites and a warehouse for our direct mail fulfillment centre. We've just had a redesign of the offices to create more space, but it looks inevitable we will need additional premises by the end of the year.

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