

COSMETICS AND CONCORDE – THE QUIET SUCCESS OF CAPALEX

When you next pass the cosmetics counters of Galleries Lafayette or other similar department stores in France, give a thought to the local manufacturing company who has helped to create the chic image associated with the top French cosmetic and perfume houses in these stores. Indeed if you're fortunate enough to travel in the newly refurbished Concorde which recently recommenced transatlantic flights, think about the same northern company that also supplied components for this symbol of Anglo-French co-operation.

Capalex has been a quiet success story, who has since the mid 1980s it has striven to expand its trading links with France and has enjoyed some notable achievements along the way.

Founded in 1979 as an extruder of aluminium sections, the company trades from its rural base in Cumbria. Over the last 20 years Capalex has grown and expanded its facilities and product range to become a high quality manufacturer of aluminium components supplying a wide range of different sectors including shop, display and office fittings and furniture, aviation and aerospace components, together with supplying the automotive sector and a host of other applications including a prototyping and design service for product development.

But it hasn't been plain sailing all the time. There have been many lessons learned along the way which have helped to refine the approach that Capalex has adopted in supplying this very special market. Unlike its other customers in Europe, whether from Germany, Holland, Scandinavia or Spain, who are happy to conduct their affairs in the 'international business language' otherwise known as English, Capalex discovered that the French expect that any company wishing to do business in France should be able to do this in French – of course, in the same position the English would adopt the same stance. In response to this

Capalex has adopted a multi-language approach in its French business, with both company literature and the company web site being in French and English, and the ability to handle phone enquiries in French as well.

The attention to detail and exacting standard required from French customers is also something that has had to be taken account of. As a high quality precision manufacturer with a number of significant approvals to its name, including from the Civil Aviation Authority, Capalex has been well placed to accommodate the stringent quality standards demanded by its French customers, but for the unwary this can often come as a surprise.

The reluctance of French customers to trade in currencies other than the French Franc is also something that Capalex has been responsive to. In its drive to do business within the Hexagon, anything that could provide an incentive for customers to buy from Capalex was adopted. So the company has for many years always quoted for products supplied to France in Francs and has offered its customers the ability to pay by cheques written in Francs if they prefer this to electronic bank transfers – something that has proved very popular with the company's smaller customers.

The aim of Capalex has been to make the option of trading with a British company as easy as doing business with companies within France. What customers appreciate is that even though Cumbria might be a thousand miles away from their business in France Capalex can show flexibility and responsiveness that is often better than what is offered by other companies nearer to home. The fact that Capalex has also traded for more than fifteen years in France also provides reassurance to customers who may be reluctant to place business with a foreign supplier.

Although Capalex are proud of its success to date, there remain aspects for doing business with France that still remain a challenge. Customer loyalty is a significant factor for French businesses, and is something that Capalex enjoys with its existing client base; however, this also means it is harder to win new business and expand into new areas. This is particularly true for Capalex in the automotive sector, where in Britain the company has supplied components for up-market models such as Jaguar and Morgan Sports Cars, as well as the new Rover Mini. However in France, Capalex has yet to make a significant impact in this industry and it is an important objective for the future.

Having only recently learned about the existence of the French Business Council, the company regrets that they did not hear about the organisation several years ago. Having gone through many of the difficulties of trading with France on their own, and learning through their own experience, they would have welcomed the advice and expertise of 'insiders' to help them. Having found out about the opportunities that such collaboration can bring, Capalex is now looking forward to all the benefits that this can provide.

Contact: enquiries@capalex.com

Website : www.capalex.com