

Openings

The trade magazine from the BBSA



ROOM DARKENING

HONEYCOMB BLINDS

PLANTATION SHUTTERS

PANEL BLINDS

NICE WORK BY GROWING COMPANY

Automated blind solutions manufacturer Nice UK continues to grow, with the opening of a training centre this month and several new additions to its marketing and sales teams.

Nice UK says the new facility is ideal for product and safety training. Courses can be tailored to the needs of individual businesses, focusing on either a specific product range or encompassing the entire product offering.



The centre includes a working automatic blind system, showcasing the quietness of the automation and its ease of use.

The space is located at the company's offices in Nottinghamshire and contains working models of its most

successful products.

As well as blinds, Nice UK supplies automation systems for swing and sliding gates, barriers and garage doors. It offers a range of control systems in different designs and serves the needs of both residential and commercial customers. Demand for the training sessions has been high, the company says.

The showroom opening is part of a pattern of sustained growth and expansion for the Nice UK team, which has recently welcomed three new sales professionals – Roddy MacClean,

Kevin Brooker and Glen Rees. The company has also appointed marketing and communications specialist Charlotte O'Farrell to its ranks.

All Nice products are developed and tested at the company's in-house research and development labs. www.niceforyou.com/uk



INSIGHT INTO DESIGN PHILOSOPHY



Awnings specialist Markilux has been explaining its approach to design – as the company stands on the brink of winning yet another award for its innovative approach.

The company's latest awning, the 970, has been nominated for the German Design Award 2017.

Markilux managing director



Markilux managing director Dan Schmitz

Dan Schmitz said that the company has experimented with shapes, colours and materials from a very early stage in its history.

Schmitz said: "We wanted to develop an awning design from the beginning which 'plays' with architecture; enhances it, sometimes melting into it, sometimes as a decorative element on the façade."

From this, a recognisable 'language of form' has developed over the years which embodies the Markilux brand.

One of the initiators of this image is the product designer Andreas Kramer.

Kramer teaches at the University of Art in Bremen and since 2001 Markilux has collaborated with him to win more than 15 design awards.

He said: "Markilux works with materials of the best quality

and offers products with high operating convenience.

"This should, of course, also be reflected in the external design. The design is basically timeless – as awnings, with their long lifespans, are not generally subject to fast-moving trends.

"However, we attempt to take individual requirements into account – for example, in the form of modular systems, through which the customer can have a say in the subsequent appearance of the product."

Markilux tries to design its awnings as aesthetically as possible.

The cloth as the actual 'shade-giver' plays a major role, as the view from below allows the user to decide whether they find the light and colour of the shade attractive, and whether the technology providing the framework for the cloth is acceptable.

Dan Schmitz said: "Because we haven't yet managed to create a solar protection cloth which floats in mid-air, we require supporting components.

"These components are permanently visible on the wall of a house – in contrast to the cloth, which can disappear into a cassette."

For this reason, the technical elements are carefully designed. Kramer's aim is to create an 'optical unity' between the cassette or cloth holder and the extension profile.



Product designer Andreas Kramer

Aesthetics therefore plays a significant role and while such considerations are subject to slower change than other elements of the industry, nevertheless awning products have also changed significantly over the past years, with improved quality.

During the production of every new Markilux design draft, the focus is placed firmly on smoothly-functioning technology and convincing innovations, says Schmitz.

For economic reasons, a completely new model will only reach the market if Markilux is convinced it can offer something really novel.

Schmitz added: "We are constantly on the look-out for ideas which reinterpret our product in a completely new way. Our aim is to continue to surprise our customers."

www.markilux.com

NEW BBSA MEMBERS

C & M Smith and Son Ltd

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www.my-floor.co.uk

01903 786466

C & M Smith and Son Ltd joined the BBSA in July, having spent many years working with leading manufacturers of shutters and blinds both in the UK and around the world.

Founder and director Lee Smart told Openings: "With our extensive showroom in the beautiful coastal village of Rustington, we can offer choice, flexibility and excellent customer care on a wide range of rollers, vertical and Venetian blinds. We are also specialists in plantation shutters, which are growing in popularity."

Lee is keen for C & M Smith and Son to expand its business and to put it firmly on the map.

"It's very important to us to convey the right message and do things properly. We want to keep growing the business and it is key to be part of an accredited organisation, for both our own and our customers' peace of mind.

"The BBSA can offer so many benefits, but just being able to use the logo to show that we are a part of the association is the main thing."

Gemini Blinds & Curtains

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www.geminiblindswirral.com

0151 6087100

Gemini Blinds began life in 1995 and was founded by husband-and-wife team Simon and Joanne Barber.

Since then, the company has gone on to become a leading provider of blinds, awnings, shutters and window dressings covering the whole of the Wirral and Ellesmere Port areas.

Gemini takes on both commercial and domestic work, making and installing with flair and to the highest of standards.

Joanne and Simon met the BBSA team at the association's 2015 show in Coventry, where they began the membership process.

Joanne told Openings: "The main reason we were keen to join was to make use of the benefits, and in particular the help and guidance the BBSA can offer on industry training and health and safety. We were keen to add another point of difference.

"One of the things that sets us apart from the competition is that we offer such a wide range of fabric and style choices, which means there's something to suit everyone, whatever their requirements.

"Our team is dedicated to providing excellent service and style advice to our customers."

Go Home Direct Ltd

Firecrest House, Lingerfield Business Park, Market Flat Lane, Scotton, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire HG5 9JA

www.infraredheatersdirect.co.uk

0330 3004444

Go Home Direct is a leading supplier of infrared heaters, sold through its website Infrared Heaters Direct.

As an authorised reseller of Burda infrared heaters, the company aims to offer trade customers competitive prices on a range of energy-efficient awning-mounted heaters, from compact domestic patio units to sophisticated Bluetooth-controlled outdoor heaters.

The company is particularly proud to be the first in the UK to sell Burda modular heaters. These innovative heat and light systems can be installed in virtually unlimited, unique combinations, featuring stylish infrared heaters interspersed with LED lighting modules.

The heating and lighting modules piece together smoothly, allowing the customer to precisely tailor the ambience of the outdoor space to their needs, while maintaining a consistent aesthetic.

Burda modular heaters are ideal for awning mounting in gardens, patios and restaurant terraces.

A spokesman for the company said: "We encourage awning manufacturers, distributors and installers interested in Burda modular heaters to get in touch with our sales department to enjoy fast free delivery and competitive trade discounts."

Lutron Electronics

6 Sovereign Close, London E1W 3JF

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0207 7020657

Founded in 1961, Lutron Electronics has its headquarters in the American borough of Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, while London is the base for its Europe and Africa operations.

From dimmers for the home to lighting management systems for entire buildings, the company offers more than 15,000 energy-saving products, sold in over 100 countries around the world.

With more than 20 years' experience in the motorised shading industry, Lutron claims to be a world leader in precision controlled motorised blinds and provides the entire shading solution - the blind itself, electronic drives, controls, power supplies, and hardware.

Lutron offers a wide range of products, with eight styles of blind and more than 1,500 materials and fabrics to suit any budget or application.

The company claims to be the only one currently creating complete systems of dimmers and motorised window shades, to control both electric lighting and natural daylight.

Nice UK Ltd

Automation House, Hamilton Road, Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, NG17 5LD

www.niceforyou.com/uk

01623 558086

Nice UK has been a leading name in home automation systems since 2004. Combining a commitment to reliability and functionality with a flair for style, the company offers a wide range of products and control systems to suit the needs of customers in both the residential and commercial sectors.

Nice has recently broadened its range of automation products for internal blinds with the introduction of ERA INN, a versatile system for optimising natural light and maximising energy efficiency in buildings. The motors were developed with quietness, alignment and ease of use in mind.

A company spokesman said: "With the addition of ERA INN to our extensive product range for blinds, joining the BBSA was the next step for connecting with other companies who work in the blind industry."

Along with its products for blinds, Nice UK also supplies automation systems for swing and sliding gates, shutters, awnings, road barriers and garage doors.

The company is linked to a large group which operates worldwide and this global reach allows Nice to develop and test its own products in dedicated research and development labs.

Solaire Blinds Limited

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Solaire Blinds has been established for over 30 years. The business was bought when director David Hopton was 19.

David told Openings: "The business began on a market stall in Morley - we now run our own factory over 20 years later.

"We recently started to manufacture vertical and roller blinds so we can maintain control of the quality of the products we supply. We don't have a showroom, which is how we can keep our prices competitively low without compromising on quality. No showroom means no showroom prices.

"We pride ourselves on being a small, family-run business whose values and personal service shine through in every aspect. We are good at what we do and have the experience and knowledge to assist our customers from the first consultation to the product being installed.

"By becoming a member of the BBSA, we want to show the industry that we care about the products we supply and to be able to gain and share knowledge from other members."

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