

RDC FOLEY COOKE has been operating since 1986 as a design consultancy, working on retail and leisure projects in the high street, airport and marine sectors. It provides complete 2D and 3D design solutions which encompass retail strategy and concepts, brand identity, graphics, visual merchandising, and project implementation. rdc Foley Cooke provides expertise in the complete design process to customers such as Harrods, Bacardi-Martini, BAA, Alpha Retail, and Tesco.

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As technological advances continue, more and more clients expect rdc Foley Cooke to produce 3D computer-generated images during the consultation phase. rdc Foley Cooke had a small in-house graphics team, but was forced to outsource 20-25% of its consultation design work to cope with client demand. The outsourcing process raised significant issues for the company. By outsourcing graphics, rdc Foley Cooke faced reduced margins, quality control problems, incompatible technology, and inconsistent formatting.

In January, 2004, rdc Foley Cooke approached London South Bank University to initiate a KTP programme to develop an in-house graphic design/3D visualisation system to overcome the problems caused by outsourcing, and to enable it to compete against other design firms who could offer integrated retail interior design and 3D graphical capability.

KTP placed two academics with the project to provide expertise. Hilary Dalke has helped expand and develop the company's creative side, while Dr. Ebad Banissi has advised from a technical and IT perspective.

Ebad explains the project: "rdc Foley Cooke wants to use 3D maps for designing retail settings. Our aim is to allow them to introduce a 3D design system which will

enable them to meet client needs and go after new business opportunities more effectively."

Ebad and Hilary are currently in the early stages of producing a paper on their involvement in this project, outlining the key issues of digital design in the retail industry. This paper will enhance the profile of both rdc Foley Cooke and LSBU.

KTP recruited Cuong Phan in 2004 to develop rdc Foley Cooke's 3D visualisation software capability for use at the initial design stage. Cuong began with conducting a market analysis to create a profile of retail design companies throughout the UK. Using his research, Cuong could then decide which software would best meet the company's goals.

After narrowing down various options, Cuong selected one specifically based on rdc Foley Cooke's need to help clients visualise their plans and give them a tangible sense of space on a design. rdc Foley Cooke has now installed the software on all of its workstations. Cuong is currently training the staff on how to use the software and how to incorporate the programme with the rest of their work.

By eliminating outsourced graphic design work, rdc Foley Cooke estimates that its profit margins will be boosted by 15-20%

per contract. The new operating system will reduce the amount of time needed to work on each project, saving additional labour costs and enhancing the final product. Design Director Roger Cooke explains, "Our KTP project helps to control the design process. Unexpected circumstances have been mitigated, which helps us better manage our business strategy as a whole."

To monitor the performance of the graphic software, Cuong also implemented a project management tool. This tool allows rdc Foley Cooke to organise contracts, work schedules, and invoices. Gavin Ferguson, Graphics Director and Industrial Supervisor at rdc Foley Cooke said, "This software is helping us streamline the design and financial management processes of our business significantly. It maximises the use of the in-house graphics system, while improving business management efficiency."

Commenting on the benefits that rdc Foley Cooke has reaped from its involvement with KTP, Roger Cooke concludes, "The structural way in which KTP functions helps us stay on track with project goals and development. KTP has highlighted areas of potential weakness and allowed us to improve and develop those areas. KTP has given us a competitive edge.