

It hasn't been the best few years for our industry; home improvement retailers have suffered the same fate as many other businesses as a result of the woes of the economy, the subsequent credit crunch and stagnant housing market.

But it hasn't all been doom and gloom, with pockets of opportunity arising and new markets opening up or being revitalised. One of these areas has been the home extension and garden room sector as people improve rather than move to allow elderly relatives and children who can't afford deposits to live with them, while others set up their own businesses, working from home, in the wake of redundancies.

We know this because we're seeing a massive growth in interest for our aluminium bi-fold and sliding doors, as more and more consumers wake up to the benefits of garden rooms, offices, pods, 'chill-out zones', granny flats and orangeries. Our aluminium bi-fold doors allow homeowners a more flexible living and working space with a 90% opening to combine indoor and outdoor living. Whether larger country properties, a semi-detached house on a new build estate or a flat in London, the demand for products that allow this combination of space is on the up.

Not just another bi-fold manufacturer

Alumen is the specialist aluminium door and window sister company to long-established GRP Designs, the Kettering based door and window retailer with 24 years experience. Through investment in machinery and highly skilled staff, we already supply high end, quality manufactured bi-fold doors into some of the UK's leading garden room installers and now we want to open up this growing market to more home improvement retailers.

Traditionally, it has been difficult to compare aluminium bi-folding door systems like for like, because manufacturers rarely offer more than one system. But in recognition of our customers' varying demands, we want to offer choice. That's why we supply both Schueco and SMART bi-folding door systems. SMART Systems are a popular choice for the domestic market with a reputation for product innovation, design and technical competence. Alumen offers the SMART Visofold 1000 and Visoglide systems. Schueco is a world class leader in energy efficient technology, and Alumen is privileged to be one of only a select number of UK fabricators able to offer the Schueco range of bi-folding sliding doors. With ingenious features such as adjustable jambs and ultra slim sightlines, the Schueco Ass70FD is a best seller. The latest polyamide thermal barrier technology which creates a thermal transmittance barrier between the cold outside and the warm inside – a great selling benefit for homeowners looking for energy efficiency and lower fuel bills – is also available on our sliding patio doors.

On the rise in the retail sector

Alan Robinson, director of specialist aluminium door and window fabricator, **Alumen**, discusses the rising trend of bi-folds in the retail sector – especially for use in garden rooms – and reveals how more and more conservatory installers are taking advantage to buck sales in a sluggish market.



Conservatory, Aynho.
Photo supplied courtesy of GRP Designs Ltd.

And of course with a higher-end sale, you'll want to be sure that the aesthetics of the doors you're buying match the quality of your room, so we have a retail-focused showroom which customers are welcome to visit with their own clients to see the door options for themselves. In addition, thanks to the comprehensive stock we hold in our Kettering facility, including a wide range of colour choices, we can offer excellent lead times – as little as two weeks in many cases. The colour options include standard RAL colour, textured colours including SMART's sensation range, with anthracite grey and other popular stock colours available on two week lead time.

We know that for some installers, the back up and technical advice is just as important as the product itself and that's why we offer a supply only or

complete supply and installation service with full 10-year guarantee through our sister company GRP Designs. Our team is always on hand with bespoke advice and technical know-how, including at the planning and design stage. We also manufacture or supply complementary aluminium products including aluminium windows, french doors, rooflights, and conservatory roofs.

So if you are looking for new product ideas, a profitable retail offering and a growing sector that will give your business a boost, why not have a chat with us? We are keen to partner with proactive installation companies across the UK so if you are interested in growing your sales with the support of the Alumen door and window brand, give us a call on: 01536 312939 or visit: www.alumen.co.uk



Grand Designs showbuilding, Grand Designs, ExCeL.
Photo supplied courtesy of Garden Spaces.



Folding corner, London.
Photo supplied courtesy of StudioNi.



White folding doors near Newbury.
Photo supplied courtesy of GRP Designs Ltd.