

A Truly Bespoke Experience

A property refurbishment and construction service like no other...

Alexis Boddy

When we hear the word 'bespoke,' the first thing that usually comes to mind is a beautifully-fitted, Savile Row suit. In the days before mass-production, tailors would keep reams of cloth on their premises for their customers to choose from. Clients would pick the cloth they wanted and then that particular length would be put to one side and was said to 'be spoken for.' The term bespoke then became synonymous with a personalised product or service, unique to the individual and of the very highest quality.

Stephen Collins, founder and CEO of Richemont Construction, has taken this concept of a bespoke service to a whole new level. His company specialises in luxury, high-end property refurbishments and construction projects. When they take on a client, the project is, like the finest Savile Row suit, cut to their exact specifications, uniquely fitted to their requirements and delivered with impeccable, meticulous customer service.

We spoke to Stephen, to discuss how his early prodigious work ethic and his background in property helped him spot a gap in the market and grow a business that offers a truly bespoke experience for each client.

Did you always know you wanted to be an entrepreneur?

I grew up in Liverpool, in a large Victorian house that had 36 bedrooms. My family lived on the upper floor and the rooms on the lower floors were let out to students. I spent my mornings before school laying tables and serving breakfast to the students and would then do the same in the evening. It was a normal part of life and it wasn't until I started secondary school at the age of 11 that I realised my peers weren't doing the same. So I had a strong work ethic from the very start and was inspired by my father, who had built a successful electrical contracting business, as well as a diverse property portfolio. During my formative years, I was involved in his work and always took a profound interest in it. So the decision to become an entrepreneur was always more of a natural, organic progression for me. That early work ethic and having my father as a role model meant that starting my own business was always on the cards.

What did you do before starting your own business?

I left school at 16 years old and joined the family business full-time. At the time, the business was a diverse, property-based group with assets ranging from children's nurseries and nursing homes to restaurants to hotels. The Portfolio consisted of many character, heritage and listed



Around seven years ago, I was contracted to consult, advise and manage a luxury refurbishment project in central London for a high-net worth, overseas client. It was during this particular venture that I saw the gap in the market for specialist, high-end property refurbishment, that looks at the client's holistic needs and provides a comprehensive strategy. I saw the enormous potential of this particular niche, and how my specific background, knowledge and skills would fit perfectly.

From this, I began Richemont Construction as a consummate, unparalleled solution for luxury builds and refurbishments. All aspects of construction and refurbishment projects, from initial concept design and planning, right through to construction management could now be undertaken by just one company.

Why do you enjoy what you do?

The best thing about my job is the enormous sense of satisfaction I get from seeing satisfied clients living in the luxury homes that my company created for them. It's a tangible, real feeling of achievement to move through all the stages - from the kernel of an idea, straight through to the finished property.

It has its challenges. Sometimes a client will decide to make changes after the building work has started. Often, what they perceive as a minor change will have ramifications for the whole build sequence, or even require new planning or building regulation approval, for example. But I enjoy finding solutions for the client and I will always endeavour to find a way to deliver the project to their specifications. Part of the process is that continual dialogue between myself and the client, always finding ways to see their vision made real.

buildings. The breadth and diversity of the types of property meant that I was able to grow and learn, building on my business and commercial acumen, as well as building up a strong foundation in property-related expertise.

Before long, I was responsible for all aspects of the property management and maintenance for the family group, as well as handling construction issues. During this time, I learned a great deal about property, cultivated a multifaceted skill set and, most importantly, discovered a genuine passion for my work. In 1997 I made the decision to leave the family business and venture out on my own. As well as running my own building company, I was brought in as a Construction Project Management Consultant for some external clients. With my extensive knowledge and experience of property development, construction, refurbishment and building management it was a "no brainer" to start my own business in this sector.

So how did you come up with the idea for Richemont Construction?



My most satisfying moment so far was when we completed an extensive project for a foreign royal family, whom I cannot name for confidentiality reasons. It was a really noteworthy moment for me, to know that the company has achieved royal approval.

Talk us through the process...

I think the most vital thing to remember is that, when dealing with Richemont Construction, you are receiving a truly bespoke experience. Our ethos is to provide a superlative client experience, that, ultimately, we are there to offer a service that puts our client's complete satisfaction as our number one priority. Each year, we only select a handful of projects, so that we can ensure our high standards and keep the client at the centre of everything we do. Quality not quantity.

Our Project Development Team consists of all the requisite experts needed to deliver a project. This includes an accomplished team of architects, planning professionals, interior designers, building surveyors, structural engineers, party wall surveyors and MEP and IT/AV specialists. We pride ourselves on being able to take clients projects from inception, through the design and statutory approval / licensing stage, onwards through the construction stage.

Our Project Delivery Team consists of highly-experienced, professional tradespeople and a select team of dedicated, reliable, bona-fide sub-contractors. Each sub-contractor is a specialist in their respective, chosen field.

Our supply chain has been built up over many years amongst luxury fixture and fittings and finishing suppliers from all over the world.

We bring all of these specialisms, all of this wealth of experience together. By managing the entire process, from start to finish, we can ensure that only the highest quality of build is delivered at completion.

We are experts in refurbishment, renovation, conversion, extension and new build construction with the emphasis on heritage, character and listed buildings. We have completed projects as diverse as multi-level basement extensions to house a swimming pool, gym and cinema, to a top-floor extension, complete with retractable roof. Our clientele are predominantly UK and overseas ultra-high net worth individuals who desire the very best lifestyle and a property to match.

How do you define success and what would be your advice for an aspiring entrepreneur?

I am a committed family man and my greatest pleasure in life is spending time with my wife and five children. So, for me, I define success as having a sustainable business, that allows me to have a great work/life balance, good health and provide a comfortable lifestyle for my family

My advice for an aspiring entrepreneur would be to never give up, always adopt a can-do attitude, believe in yourself and smile!

Richemont Construction:

Richemont is to high end, bespoke property refurbishment and construction, what a tailored Savile Row suit is to the very best quality store-bought version, however good the store-bought suit is, there really is no comparison between us and our competition.

Specialising in the Super Prime residential sector, primarily (but not exclusively) in the upmarket areas of London, we are experts in refurbishment, renovation, conversion, extension and new build construction with the emphasis on heritage, character and listed buildings.

