

STAFF IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Ray Hall

Update spoke to Managing Director Ray Hall about his 30 years with the company



"When I look back over my 30 years, I feel immensely proud of the progress that RH Hall has made in what has, at times, (and still is!), a very challenging marketplace with fluctuating economic climates albeit a very exciting and passionate industry to be working in.

When I joined in the early 80's, my father Ron was MD. He had, from his early beginnings in 1963 as a self-employed electrical repairer, built a strong foundation to the business. The company developed its interest in the electrical retail sector, but then seeing in the late 70's the huge opportunities in the fast growing microwave oven industry he decided it was time to concentrate on this specialist area. He became a major distributor of domestic microwave ovens in the UK, opening up one of the first Microwave Oven Centres in 1978 and the new company was named R.H.Hall (microwave) Ltd.



I joined, having turned down a management job with the Burton Group, to organise the service department. With the opening of two further Microwave Oven Centres I then moved into sales and headed up the three shops.

As sales in domestic microwaves increased, greater interest was taken in this market by large multiple retailers and electrical superstores – this led to heavy price/margin erosion which as a smaller specialist independent we could not compete with, so we seized an opportunity to focus on to the commercial market. By then we had years of specialised experience in microwave cooking - my mum, Ann, had run

microwave oven cookery roadshows in the late '70's - and having established our own Maestrowave brand we were ideally placed to develop this market.

Based on our successful reputation, we expanded into offering other catering equipment products to our own trade distributors. By 1992 I was Sales & Marketing Director and we published our first colour catalogue - quite a few less pages than our current 'Encyclopaedia'!



In the mid 90's we were approached by Sharp to become their sole UK & Eire distributor - this was the first of a series of exclusive distribution arrangements that we brokered. We now also have Smeg, Crown Verity, Simply Stainless, Maestrowave and iWave exclusivity, with more to follow this year.

In 1996 with continued growth and confidence in the business (we'd achieved double digit growth year on year) we moved to new premises in Berkhamsted, where we stayed for 10 years.

My father retired in 2000 from the day to day involvement in the company to become Chairman and follow his own business interests in the Far East, I then became MD.

In 2006 we planned a further HQ move as we needed much larger premises to cope with our growth plans. We made our biggest investment ever in purchasing a purpose built, state of the art, 23,000 sq ft head office, distribution and development kitchen centre in Pitstone.

A WORD FROM OUR FOUNDER... RON HALL

Ray has to be congratulated on achieving 30 years with the company. A great deal of progress is due to his efforts and vision, He has relentlessly pursued opportunities to gain exclusivity with some of the top names in the industry. He has vastly increased the range of products we supply and taken the company into new areas of technology with products like the iWave system and has continued to insist on the policy of understanding customer's needs and working with them to our mutual benefits. Congratulations to Ray and to his team.



In 2012 we made a further big investment into a new Fabrications business, to be able to provide additional bespoke equipment to customers – our business ethos is "If you can sketch it, we can make it!" This facility is now not only producing specialist fabricated cabinets for the foodservice industry, but products for other industries too.

Now 35 years on, we are still building the business and looking to innovation to give us a real competitive edge and point of difference over other foodservice equipment wholesalers. Our influence is growing with major food companies too where we are developing total food solutions to meet the modern day requirements of the catering market.

Going forward, we have many new initiatives planned, including further expansion in the UK and overseas markets, especially Europe where we currently work with one of the largest foodservice companies in France. There are also many new projects/products that we plan to launch this year including our brand new web platform.

Eating and drinking will never be out of fashion and RH Hall plan to stay at the forefront of this exciting industry and with 2013 being my 30th year in the business it's set to be the best year ever!

Thanks to all my colleagues and family and a special thanks to Kris my Co-Director who's brought a great deal to our business and a solid friendship."

