



Left to right: Sales adviser Anne Gorst, director Andrew Grice and store manager Jake Forshaw

The Sumners tale

Sumners of Kirkham, near Preston in Lancashire, is an established independent TV and AV retailer that's been in business since 1945.

Primarily a Panasonic dealer, Sumners also sells Roberts radios and AV furniture from Alphason.

Within the last year, it's also moved into selling Panasonic home appliances.

Current owner Andrew Grice is the third generation of the family. "The business started out by selling bikes, then moved into radio and then TV in the Fifties. It's always kept moving on and trying different things," he says.

This summer, the store, which is narrow and about 10 metres long, underwent a refit care of specialist shopfitting company Replan.

As Mr Grice explains, the time had come to do something different with the store.

"We needed a revamp – we'd had a lot of old wooden staging in the shop and it looked quite tired," he says.

"We did a shop fit five or six years ago, which had a silver and blue theme, but we decided it needed updating, so we contacted Replan – they'd come highly recommended. They were excellent and they came up with some great plans. They took all of the wooden staging out of the shop and moved the counter further back to make the store look more open.

"We're thrilled with it. It does the products a lot more justice – we're predominantly a Panasonic dealer, so it was all about showing off the good-looking products. It needed that extra sparkle and wow factor. We've gone down the route of a black and white interior with grey flooring."

The entire shopfitting process took around two weeks. "We shut the shop, stripped it out, then had a new floor, ceiling and lighting put in. Then Replan came in and did the job in effectively two days," he says.

"We knew things would be quiet in the summer, so we used the opportunity to do the shop fit. It's a nice working environment for us and it gives us a fresh look."

Focused

"We're a small shop and we've always focused on TV and audio, but now we've also moved into selling Panasonic home appliances. It takes time to establish yourself selling different products – we've always been known for our TV and audio. Now we're marketing our home appliances and it will take time to develop that side of the business. To a degree, the margins in white goods are holding up slightly better [than in browns]."

The new shop fit has also helped to improve the sales

Traditionally a brown-goods retailer, Panasonic specialist Sumners of Kirkham has recently undergone a store refit and also moved into selling home appliances.

Sean Hannam reports on how it all went



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of DAB and internet radios for Sumners.

"We've moved them in from the window displays and put them on glass shelves. They're plugged in, switched on and we're demonstrating internet radio – it's all up

and running," says Mr Grice. "We pride ourselves on doing demos – we've got a home-cinema set-up and a projector room. You've got to be able to do demos – we're not just a box shifter."

Commenting on business in general, Mr Grice tells *ERT*: "It's tough for everybody, but we're holding our own. Our slogan is 'Providing service others only talk about'. We really push that side of things. We're in a small market town and people know us for our service. We're based between Preston and Blackpool, so we pick up a lot of business from the towns and villages on the outskirts. A lot of our core customers are from the older generation."

Looking ahead, Mr Grice says: "From September, we're going to be gearing up for Christmas. The shop looks absolutely stunning and when people come in to look at the products, we're ready for them." **ERT**