

# Market Assessment Q&A with Darren Pavitt

Pre Construction Director, Middle East

ISG

Darren Pavitt, Pre Construction Director, Middle East answers our questions about strategy, capabilities and what makes a market attractive.



OUR

CLIENTS

## How do you define ISG ME strategy?

ISG has done exceptionally well over the past 2 years to diversify our sector offering which has really helped the balance of the company. In the early days we primarily worked in Office projects whereas today with our live projects, starting in Dubai, we are working on a leisure project on Bluewater for Meraas. We have also just finished the Roxy Cinema at Boxpark under this same sector. Following on from the success of Kempinski we are delivering multiple hospitality projects with the H Hotel's newest restaurant Zahira to the Golden Tulip with a full hotel refurbishment. Healthcare has been the other real growth sector for us over the past 2 years with multiple projects being successfully delivered both in Abu Dhabi with CCAD and Healthpoint but also in Dubai with the MAF Polyclinics in Al Barsha and Nad Al Hamar.

This diversity is seeing us maintaining a solid workflow in a difficult market and we are careful with ensuring we maintain a well balanced business operating in multiple sectors.

## How has the market been so far this year and how do you see it in Q3 and Q4?

There is no doubt this year has followed very much in the footsteps of last year which was a tough year for the whole industry. We have started the year well with some significant wins. The Abu Dhabi Sports facility and Zayed University Kitchens gave us a great platform to build on for the year. April has been another solid month of wins coming from CCAD's new Executive Health ward and the W Hotel's signature restaurant giving us a welcome boost to sales just before the summer period kicks in.

## How do you see ISG place within the interior fit out sector?

ISG is on a continuous journey to achieve the best quality we can in all areas of the business. This is a continuous pursuit and one that we are always looking to improve which makes working at ISG a rewarding company to be a part of. In the 7.5 years I have been with the company I can honestly say that we are in a really exciting period of change and the introduction of technology and automated systems will have an immediate and positive impact to the way we work and also how the market perceives our offering. We have always been striving for excellence and we will always continue to do so. I think this puts us in a unique position in a marketplace that moves at a much slower pace, this drive will help keep us at the top of the pile in our respective sectors.

## What are the characteristics of an attractive market?

It's been a while since we have seen an attractive market. I'm a firm believer in making the best of the situation in front of me.

We have a good client base and we are doing much better than we ever have done at making sure we put our customers first and this is paying off with a notable increase in repeat business from a variety of customers, including Meraas, MAF, CCAD, Golden Tulip, Serco.

The market is what it is and we are doing better than many winning our fair share of work. The horizon looks promising with some key target opportunities coming in Q3+4 this year and I look forward to sharing news of the successful conversions of these opportunities into real projects for you to deliver.

## What do you attribute ISG's success in winning all of recent work?

I'd like to say it's all down to me, but it really is a team effort. For every tender we have Phil K and his team to thank in the first instance. A phrase that's useful to consider in this is "You Have to kiss a lot of frogs" and it's tough to be selective but that is exactly what we have been this year. As a company we have a far greater sense of identity and knowing this we know where we can compete and offer something that differentiates us from the rest of the competition. After the tenders arrive almost all departments play some part in how our proposals are put together. Planning, Approvals, Design, TSMs, PMs, QS's, Finance, HR all support the Bid Team and for that I'm lucky there are so many we can call on to help make our bid submissions the best they can be.

The second reason for our recent success has been down to the hard work and efforts of everyone in the company to put their maximum efforts into all aspects of this company and the results have been noticeably improved. Most importantly this has been picked up by the people that matter most, our clients and consultants. This has had a knock on effect in our market reputation and this is helping us to become an easier choice when a client is selecting their contractor to deliver their next project. Keep up the good work!

## Looking ahead, what geographies are en route to becoming attractive that may be of interest to us?

At the moment we are focusing on the UAE and overcoming the changes of last year and putting a robust plan into action ensuring this business is in the best shape it can be in by the end of 2017.

You will be aware of some of the processes and training modules that will be rolled out over the next 12 months. I don't want to give too much away but you can expect ISG to deliver on its promise to be the world's leading dynamic construction services company. Streamlined systems and more modern tools will soon be at your disposal and this is certainly a great time to learn a new way of doing things.

We are open to new geographies and I would expect to see some progress on this in 2018 but for now the UAE is the focus for the here and now.