

# Talking Business: INSTYLE

WITH NO INITIAL VISION TO EXPAND INTERNATIONALLY OR BOOM INTO AN INDUSTRY LEADER IN DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY, TEXTILE GIANT INSTYLE HAS, OVER THE PAST 27 YEARS, CONTINUOUSLY ADAPTED TO THE NEEDS OF THE MARKET AND FOUND SUCCESS IN EMBRACING OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE JOURNEY. HERE, WE SPEAK TO FOUNDER AND MANAGING DIRECTOR, MICHAEL FITZSIMONS, WHO EXPLAINS HOW THE CHANGING SCENE OF WORKPLACE DESIGN HAS ALTERED THE TYPE OF TEXTILES AND OTHER PRODUCTS THAT ARE BEING DEVELOPED FOR THE OFFICE TODAY.



Adjacent left: Calibre and Sense fabric on modular seating  
Above left: Foliar by Adam Cornish  
Above right: Ecoustic Foliar by Adam Cornish

The focus on commercial-quality textiles is, as of late, being magnified within industry and leading suppliers such as Instyle, are taking full advantage through the creation of truly unique designs. The hype around Instyle can be credited to its consistent, design-driven products produced from superior materials, as featured here.

In addition to textiles, Instyle provides leathers, vinyls, wall finishes, acoustic products and modular tile systems for interiors including office spaces, the hospitality and healthcare sector, public buildings, transport, public spaces and residential interiors. Such projects have included Qantas aircrafts and lounges, Sydney Olympic Stadium, government departments and major international corporations' headquarters such as Facebook, Google and American Express.

Instyle's sophisticated collections are developed to industry leading standards by its in-house design team and are then produced by manufacturers in Australia, New Zealand, USA and Europe. For Instyle, manufacturing location depends on the product area, however the majority of its textiles and acoustic products are produced locally with long-standing, leading manufacturers.

"When I established Instyle in 1987, I wanted to promote and support local design and local manufacturers. This is still a key

motivation for us as locally-made textiles are an important feature of our extensive collection," says Fitzsimons.

"I started with a small range of office-interior-focused wool textiles that were designed and manufactured by local mills. After a few years of operation, we set up an in-house studio to design our own distinctive range of products," he explains.

The company sources premium natural leathers from Europe and Scandinavia, "because these countries supply the highest quality raw hides due to their low impact farming methods and tanneries. They are at the leading edge of technological and environmental innovation," says Fitzsimons.

Adding the competitive edge of sustainability to its business in 2002, Instyle has and continues to develop in this field. Instyle's Life Textiles collection was the first sustainable textile collection in Australia to address the entire lifecycle of sustainable production, from the sourcing of raw materials, to product recyclability. Today, the company continues to advocate for lifecycle based products and standards.

This commitment has paid off immeasurably for Instyle, having won numerous sustainability awards at the United Nations' World Environment Day Awards and the NSW Government Green Globe Awards.

It is evident and accepted knowledge that in order to expand successfully within a challenging and competitive industry, collaboration is paramount. Instyle has undertaken many joint ventures with companies such as Contemporary Leathers in 2001 and Wovin Wall in 2006. The company has also invested in many partnerships, such as recent collaboration with Adam Cornish to produce Foliar and Ecoustic Foliar.

"When we were looking to collaborate with designers to expand our wall finishes range a few years ago, our partners at Box and Dice recommended Adam as they had worked with him previously on his prototypes and liked his design aesthetic and approach.

"We liked his concept for Foliar immediately – it was beautiful, playful and unique in that the user could interact with it. The concept for Ecoustic Foliar evolved while developing Foliar, as acoustic products were becoming an important consideration, and it fit nicely into our successful Ecoustic collection released early last year," Fitzsimons says.

Internationally recognised, Instyle's presence spans from Australia, throughout America, Canada, Asia, Middle East and UK and is distributed in New Zealand by its wholly owned subsidiary, VIVID Textiles Ltd.

With Instyle carrying such influence and creative ability, Fitzsimons is positioned to



view industry in a discerning, sophisticated way. Hence, we asked him to share his thoughts on current trends in workspace design and discovered how these trends and changes are influencing Instyle's designs.

"The new design of open plan workspaces has led to the increased requirement for acoustic products to reduce noise and disruption.

"Another trend is the move towards activity-based workspaces (ABW), which has seen the inclusion of pods or work areas with their own in-built acoustic capabilities to encourage collaboration.

"With finishes, A&D clients are looking for textured products using a combination of neutrals on workstations and ergonomic chairs. Textures in bright colours are often used in blocks of colours or as accents on casual and lounge furniture. Patterns are used as accents or in combination with plains

and textures within one piece of furniture," he says.

Instyle's products are often designed to meet a brief and then supplied to professionals in the architecture and design industry. Such designs are focused on a range of factors including the specific market it is being designed for, price-driven factors or performance-driven factors to meet a specific abrasion, fire or acoustic result.

Surprisingly, plans for Instyle were never to expand internationally. The catalyst for its rapid growth was the demand from expat Australian designers in the USA, Hong Kong and Singapore wanting to use Instyle's products.

"This resulted in distributors in these countries approaching us to represent our products in these markets," Fitzsimons says.

"In the USA, we decided to establish our own company in 2002. In 2006 our distribution changed when the American

Below: Calibre fabric on chair and Ecooustic Foliar by Adam Cornish  
Adjacent top: Ecooustic Panel 8mm  
Adjacent middle: Avenger fabric at Austin Health: Olivia Newton-John Cancer & Wellness Centre  
Adjacent bottom: Wovin Wall at I-Square



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company 3form licensed our customised Wovin modular system products and at the same time, Unika Vaev, a well-established North American wholesaler, approached us to represent our sustainable Life Textiles collection," he says.

Since, Instyle's USA business has flourished and Unika Vaev has taken on the entire textile and acoustic product collections.

"Over the last three years, our international sales network has grown significantly in other parts of the world and Instyle's products are now represented in New Zealand, USA, UK, Europe, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Middle East," Fitzsimons said.

Instyle's design team stays up-to-date with current and future trends primarily through international trade shows, design magazines and the Internet.

"One of our designers has just returned from the London Design Festival and has indicated that furnishings are still incorporating a lot of texture, and a large variety of textures, from an aesthetic viewpoint and because textures offer longevity, as they do not date as quickly as patterns. There is also the use of natural finishes such as wool and leather in furniture designs as they provide a hand made authenticity," Fitzsimons says.

As workspaces in Australia and abroad continue to evolve, as do the products industry is producing, clearly illustrating the timeless flow between the changing way humans interact and the flow-on effect of way design responds. With influential industry leaders such as Instyle, the future looks bright.

[instyle.com.au](http://instyle.com.au)

