

Mark Adams (1961) Managing Director, Vitsøe



Mark Adams is the managing director of Vitsøe, a company that passionately believes that we can all live better with less that lasts longer. For the past 50 years, the company has manufactured, distributed and sold the modular 606 Universal Shelving System designed by Dieter Rams that transcends temporary interpretations of fashion and style. Over the years, Vitsøe has carefully evolved and enhanced the design of this system – always ensuring it is completely relevant to today and seamlessly compatible with past iterations. The system allows customers to start small, add to it, take it with them when they move and reconfigure it, as life's circumstances demand.

Smart design, seamless efficiency and a singular focus extends beyond the product at Vitsøe. It is the guiding ethos around which Mark Adams transformed this modest shelving operation into a global enterprise synonymous with excellence, simplicity and service.

Shortly after graduating university, Adams became associated with Vitsøe identifying it as a product line with unrealized potential. In 1986, at the age of 24, Adams established Vitsøe UK and became the sole importer and distributor of Vitsøe products in the United Kingdom. Under Adams's leadership, Vitsøe UK quickly became the largest retail account for Vitsøe.

Adams established himself as a trusted advisor to the company's founder Niels Vitsøe and designer Dieter Rams consulting on issues related to production, sales and marketing. In 1987 he facilitated the move of some of the production aspects of the 606 Universal Shelving System to the UK to cut costs and boost efficiencies for the overall business. In 1993, when Niels Vitsøe retired, Adams was invited to join the German entity and began the process of streamlining the company and positioning it to realize that potential.

Identifying the 606 Universal Shelving System as the company's best-seller and primary asset, Adams put his attention into enhancing, refining and re-engineering the shelving system. He focused on improving the performance of the product while making it quicker and more efficient to produce and deliver to customers. By 1995, Adams had moved all Vitsøe production and operations to the UK.

In order to transform the organization from simple furniture manufacturer to a genuine service business, Adams cultivated a talented team of design professionals with a deep understanding of the product and a true commitment to customer service. He built a lean, well-trained staff of planners and a network of suppliers who knew the "ins- and-outs" of the Vitsøe product – how it was to be designed, how it was to be made, how it was to be delivered and explained to the customer; and how it was to function in daily life.

Adams connected the front-end planning team with the back-end systems to create fully integrated processes throughout the organization with quality control at every stage. He invested in the development of powerful, easy-to-use software and technology that enables consumers to take part in the design process and interact

with Vitsøe planners online, enhancing consumer communications and relationships. Today, 100% of Vitsøe customers interact with the company online where the vast majority of the company's transactions take place. The Vitsøe shops serve to support the web-based operations. By aligning the entire process from consumer interaction, to design, to production and delivery, Adams created a business model whereby each and every customer benefits from personalized service and the creation of a unique product tailored to their life now and tomorrow.

In 1997 Adams forged a partnership with New York design dealer Murray Moss to develop the US market and expand the company's global influence. The move proved to be very successful and in 2009 Vitsøe opened its own shop in New York on Bond Street. That same year Adams relocated Vitsøe's London flagship shop to a larger space on Duke Street near Manchester Square. Today, Vitsøe's web operation gives the brand a global footprint and the company regularly conducts business with customers in more than 50 countries.

Mark Adams attended Oundle School in Northamptonshire, England where he was introduced to carpentry, metalworking and other crafts that cultivated his innate love of the way things are made. At the University of Exeter he studied Zoology giving him a keen appreciation of the workings of the natural world, most especially the process of evolution. Adams is a fellow of the Royal Society of Art, where he both lectures and judges awards. Adams works closely with Dieter Rams to this day and is a key member of the team that organises Rams's exhibitions and appearances worldwide.