



A previous poor experience with a kitchen retailer led one couple to Michael Taplin of Elements Kitchens in Reading. He needed no second chances and converted the sale with exemplary service

**W**hen a couple entered Michael Taplin's showroom to buy a fridge then left having bought a kitchen, you would be forgiven for putting it down to good sales techniques. For the couple in question, however, exemplary customer service was a more important factor in their decision to order from Elements Kitchens. This was because they had experienced considerable stress with the retailer originally tasked with the job of designing the kitchen for their barn conversion. Michael elaborates: "The clients had paid a deposit to a previous retailer then had no communication from them. They were not given any dates when their kitchen was going to be installed. So when they cancelled with that company and came to us

for a fridge, they were very nervous. They were shocked at the level of service we gave them just selling a fridge, which is why they gave us the opportunity to supply the kitchen."

**Black and blue**  
Having gone through the design process with the previous company, the couple already had a basic idea of what they wanted. But Michael realised that to get the best out of the room he needed to add his own thoughts. He explains: "It's not uncommon to have to tailor your design, as normally clients have taken ideas from other designers when they have been shopping around."

Because the kitchen was being installed in a barn conversion, the clients wanted to make a statement. So Michael suggested

black gloss for the units, an aluminium trim to tie in with their stainless steel appliances and blue glass for the splashback. "They liked the glass because they wanted to make an impact like the glass pyramid at the Louvre, which is out of the ordinary and stunning – a nice surprise," Michael adds.

**Hide it away**  
The couple didn't want to include an eating area, as their two storey entrance hall doubles as the dining room and is just off the kitchen. So there was plenty of room for Michael to include storage. As an extra he also opted for a tambour unit to house the couple's small appliances. This means they can then be kept plugged in and pushed back out of the way when not in use, making the room feel more

spacious. Michael states: "I kept the floors and worktops light and the splashback is glass, so reflects the light well. Although the ceilings are not too low, being a barn they are lower than average."

**Straighten out**  
Although they wanted a modern look, the client didn't want to lose sight of the buildings origins, so Michael kept the barn doors and beams. But unfortunately it is not only charming characteristics that come with a barn conversion. "The walls in the kitchen were unbelievably out of square and we were putting in glass, so we had to make them even. The installation itself is an easy job, but it takes twice as long to install a kitchen in a room where the walls are higgledy piggledy. It is important to have the right person to do this as they need to be patient. Luckily we offer a complete service, so I had the right man for the job," he exclaims.

**A complete package**  
Although Michael considered all

of the design carefully to achieve the best look, this project was more about making sure the couple had a positive experience. "We will take care of whatever someone wants us to from flooring, lighting, installing, plastering, and electrical work, even down to decorating. I think this is crucial to the service you offer nowadays. Most people we sell kitchens to are professionals and both couples work and don't want to be messing about phoning to find out where the plumber is. Lots of kitchen companies still don't offer this service and think it's easier not to do the extras. This benefits us, because if someone wants a whole scheme done then 50% of the companies in this area are ruled out straight away," he concludes.

So for Michael good customer service resulted in a conversion from selling a fridge to a kitchen, and for his clients they received peace of mind – and you can't put a price on that!



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**Fact box**

**Type of property:**  
Five bedroom converted barn, Reading  
**Client:** Professional couple  
**Price:** £30,000  
**Materials used:** Alno Tec Pro high gloss black furniture, Britannia Sigma XG oven and K7088ASC hood, Miele M8161 microwave and KWT4154 UG-1 wine cooler, Neff K3990 fridge freezer and S54E53 dishwasher, Blanco Axia 6S ALA248 sink, ISE 65 waste disposer, PWS Fuzzy cabinet lights



Black gloss units with an aluminium trim tied in with the stainless steel appliances



**Alno**  
circle readerlink 439  
**Blanco**  
circle readerlink 440  
**Britannia**  
circle readerlink 441  
**ISE**  
circle readerlink 442  
**Miele**  
circle readerlink 443  
**Neff**  
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**PWS**  
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