



# profile



## Liquorish Whirl

As everybody knows, we at Mix live a jetset lifestyle. Take, for example, our first and most recent meetings with Steve Liquorish. Our first encounter a few years ago was in Chicago; our last chat a few weeks ago was in Wantage.

Oh yes, we get around.

It was in Chicago that we first realised that Steve was our kind of guy. By which we mean, entrepreneurial, witty, driven, full of commonsense, design-aware and a really significant player in our industry. Anyway, fast forward a few years, skip past our regular suggestions of a profile politely declined (a certain low-key modesty is another of Steve's attributes) and here we are. In Wantage. Not Chicago.

So, starting at the beginning, we ask Steve where he's from. You're going to be amazed at what he said.

'I'm Wantage born and bred.' Right.

'Dad's a nuclear physicist; he's worked on pioneering research at Amersham International. Mum died when I was 14; a big life changing event for me. At school I was ok if I was interested in the subject, but I went off the rails when I was 14. I was disruptive, the class clown.

'Dad wanted me to go for an electronics apprenticeship. We (he) produced an excellent fishing bite indicator which got me an interview. As a result of my (his) practical example of my skills I was now one of only 50 applicants – down from an original 700. I was looking good and thought it was going well at the second interview

until I was exposed as clueless by a simple question about Ohm's Law. I'd never heard of it!  $V=IR$  (Vaults = Amp time Resistance is something that I have never forgotten since!).

'So I did a C&G and HNC in joinery and carpentry. I qualified, but I knew for sure I didn't want to spend the rest of my life on building sites. I got a joinery job on £10k a year, but gave it up for a job on only £3k. It was telesales, selling industrial wheels and castors.

'Halver Castors was a German owned company, importing castors from the States. Their supplier, Babcock FKI, also had a chair mechanism manufacturing division called Faultless Doerner. I was doing well and had progressed quickly to external sales, so I was sent to Canada for a month to learn all about the chair mechanisms. It must have seemed an inexpensive way of testing the market. I got back from Canada and started selling tilt and synchro mechanisms from scratch. I was a baby faced 21 year old, but I did ok. My first order was for 500 mechanisms to Contraplan! Other early customers were the likes of Senator, Prince Moran and Wallis.

'Then Halver decided to concentrate on selling castors so they could support the German castor factory. I knew Faultless Doerner wouldn't be happy with that, so I seized the opportunity – along >>>>>>



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►►►innovate with some of the emerging technologies and to explore integrated building services solutions.

'These days our business is split between the Ergo and CMS brands. I'm keen to continue to clarify to the market what the differences are – and what we stand for. We're about design innovation – I'm looking to grow the IP side of our business. That's a big part of my plan to grow the business by 50% in the next three years.

'What drives me? I want, no, I need to excel at whatever I'm interested in. I'm classic alpha male competitive. I think your life plan is about choice – you don't know what's around the corner. I also say to our two kids, Ryan (who's at uni) and Samuel (15), that it's ok to be competitive, but also to add a bit of humanity. Self appraisal's important.

'I've always been interested in motor sport. When I turned 39 I took a week's intensive course at Silverstone. After that I jumped in at the deep end, driving in the BMW Mini Challenge. After a year I started to get some podium positions and I was on my way. After three years doing that, this year I'm driving a Porsche GT3 cup car in the Porsche GT 3 Challenge – and I'm very fortunate to have

sponsorship from a local Porsche garage. After races at places like the Nurburgring, Silverstone and Oulton Park I came third out of 20 in this year's championships. It's been tough to have got here, but I enjoy it immensely.'

Driving home (from Wantage, and not in a Porsche), we mused about something Steve said about his less than stellar school career. 'But if I was interested, I was ok.' Whether it's at CMS Ergo, or on a chicane, Steve is very clearly very, very interested ●

