

7th August 2014

Reference: ES1910AR

Dear Mr Saunders,

I'm sure you are, as the Managing Director of what is apparently the second largest home improvements company in the UK, extremely busy. However there is a question that I would appreciate your advice on. I must apologise this printed out to be a little longer than I'd anticipated, yet it does read in 3-5 minutes.

My background and education is mostly engineering (multi-discipline) and my current employment is in the IT department of a technology company that produces high-transaction software. I'm used to dealing with very technical information, drawings and a wide range of enterprise level hardware/software suppliers and integration partners. "A good engineer gets things right first time" as was instilled into me from quite a young age.

A few years ago I inherited the house I grew up in (the place that has been my home for the last 41 1/2 years), then in *August* 2013 I decided it was about time that I get the still-original windows replaced.

Everest looked like they'd be able to give me what I wanted, so I arranged for a salesman to come round and give me a quote.

I explained what I wanted, which was timber frames, reproduction of the original stained glass designs from 1936 and generally "like for like as far as possible to retain the character of the house".

This I was *assured* Everest would be able to provide, so we shook on that and went through the required paperwork.

Note that I'm not refurbishing the house to sell on, but to continue to live in it as my home.

The total of £38,000~ for the whole house did seem quite steep, but then if you want something done properly you don't do it 'on the cheap', then there's always your old slogan of "fit the best"...

Further conversation brought the suggestion that I didn't have to have it all done at once, so we decided on just the upper half of the house, for £20,816.

I do have to say, it is within my means to have the whole thing done at once, however I have other refurbishment plans for the house so it seemed like an acceptable and sensible compromise.

So then the surveyor came round to make adjustments to the draft that the salesman had put together. He showed me he knew what he was doing by making appropriate suggestions to ensure that what I wanted and could have was up to modern building practices and codes. I had every confidence in them. The proposed installation date was 26/28th *October* 2013.

I have included with this an approximate timeline and images of all the relevant designs.

To summarise:

There are two bespoke stained glass designs required to fulfill my request of 'like for like'.

The first, larger one of these looked in Everests initial attempt as if a child had drawn it.

I traced the email chain back to CET, finding them friendly and knowledgeable, then liased with them (during *October* 2013) on the design specs/dimensions and was looking forward to seeing what they would produce, which (eventually, when I saw it in January) turned out to be an almost perfect replica and I'd be honoured to have that craftsmanship adorn my house.

Their heartening and amusing comment to me was "...wish they had more customers like you, it would certainly make my life easier!".

Note that I resolved this directly with CET, which took under a week.

The second, smaller, simpler design somehow got mangled after I'd agreed with the proposed 'designs' - basically, *\*someone\** took the original design (which is *obviously* a completely different size), chopped off the bottom section (to make it fit) and had that manufactured without informing me of any changes or getting my approval.

It took until *January* to find out what any of these looked like, then even after me supplying *to-scale drawings* of what I'd expected the different sized panels to look like, there has been no apology or movement to actually producing these.

After being told variously "Can't see the problem. Looks good enough to me. You should have them put in and fix it later", which gave me the impression someone was being leaned on to fill their quota and make it all just go away.

By the time *March* came around, I'd had quite enough and asked to cancel, stating very clearly that if I heard nothing more, to consider this matter closed.

I heard nothing more, so assumed that was it.

Then in early *July* I received with some surprise a rather terse email informing me that "Your windows are still in our warehouse. You have to arrange an installation date or we will pass your case to our legal team".

A couple of emails later, this had calmed down to a more reasonable conversation, but still, that was somewhat uncalled for given that all the issues have been generated within Everest itself.

However, within the last *seven* months, Everest have neither produced the correct designs, nor admitted that due to the overly administrative company structure that this wouldn't be possible and allowed me to cancel.

As I'm sure you can imagine, this leaves me in quite a difficult position.

\* I've been unable to progress any other of my refurbishment plans due to the uncertainty of this dragging on.

\* My home has been in disarray since October, leaving me stressed, distressed and somewhat depressed by the whole thing.

\* I'm unable to accept the incorrect designs, as by all accounts and based on existing behaviour - given also that it is Everests process that failed - that they would never be fixed, leaving me with a 'house full of lemons' and a requirement to come back again in 18 months to do it all again for the rest of the house.

\* I'm not being allowed to cancel the order and seek an alternative supplier. Even though after what is for me now nearly a year, Everest have been unwilling/unable to produce to the specifications given and originally agreed to, for what really is a very simple design.

I would imagine that when you consult with your subordinates that they will likely shout very loudly that I've 'refused' visits to St Albans to see the windows, also that I've 'refused' visits from surveyors to get this sorted out. As far as I'm concerned, neither of those are actually necessary. For the latter I've supplied to-scale drawings of exactly what I was expecting, so all Everest needed to do was have them manufactured. For the former, there are these things called digital cameras or even smartphones, that produce images that can be sent via email. Negating having to spend a day traveling to and from St. Albans.

From my perspective, which I have described numerous times to your staff, there are two acceptable ways out of this:

- 1)
  - a) Produce the correct designs to the given specifications, confirming with me what is to be manufactured.
  - b) Produce the rest of the windows (with the correct designs) *so that I never have to come back and deal with Everest ever again.*
  - c) Because this whole debacle has been the internal fault of Everest, don't charge me more than the existing/outstanding £18,816 as a way to say sorry for all of this.
- 2)

Allow me to cancel, make a clean break and find another supplier, without charging me anything.

So my question is: One way or another, how do we make this go away?..

To be perfectly honest, the most accurate description I can give of my experience with Everest over the past year, has been like living in the film "Brazil" by Terry Gilliam.

The impression I've had of your internal structure is that you may as well have just used email as a replacement for everyone having a physical in/out tray and a rubber stamp.

It's as if starting this project created an unstoppable force that has no allowances for change, which to me is somewhat insane.

The whole process has been unbelievably administratively heavy (are there really 57 people involved with each individual project??), with no one person able to tell me what was going on, or even that "Yes, we'll get on that right away and fix it for you".

It might be time for a change.

What I would suggest is a well designed web portal.

Where customers can see at what stage of production each of their units are, along with the manufacturers being able to liaise more directly for any bespoke designs - so *\*everyone\** has access to the same information, at the same time. Thereby reducing your administrative overhead.

Using modern web technologies to create an integrated application, the salespeople/surveyors could have their aging Windows XP laptops replaced with lighter technologies, giving them the same functionality offline, but also integrated with, the main web portal. It shouldn't be that difficult for any reasonable software house to create. In fact it's how the offline google docs/chromebook ecosystem works.

Thank you for your time.

Regards,

Sean Meacher



## Timeline and involved parties for ES1910AR

### August 2013

Requested appointment for quotes

### September 2013

Initial visit from Trevor Edwards (Sales - he's a very nice man. Friendly and helpful)

**10th Sept:** Visit from Robbie Yapp (Surveyor - friendly and knowledgeable)

Original provisional installation date set as 28th October

### October 2013

Initial attempt at designs from/via Everest. Traced back the email chain to Andy Hill @CET. Liased with him to finalise the larger design. Friendly, courteous, knowledgeable. Everything great customer service should be.

Installation date moved to January.

### November/December 2013

My requests to see what I was supposed to be getting led to an offer of visiting St. Albans. I actually only wanted some pictures or appropriate web links.

**16th Dec:** Was told by Robyn Drury that "the factory are having trouble with the glass design and sizes".

**20th Dec:** Everest sent Robbie Yapp to my office, where I gave him a copy of the original design for the smaller windows (#4 on page 1 of the accompanying diagrams) - This could just have easily been sent electronically, so in my opinion, was a complete waste of time.

By email the same day, I asked for "If you could send me back copies of any adjustments so that I know what I'm getting, that would be great."

*Note that it was not explained to me what the "trouble" was, otherwise I would have provided the scale drawings at this point.*

I have a suspicion that this is where it all went wrong...

### January/February 2014

Request from Helen Mundy to arrange an installation date - Note at this point I'd no idea of what anything looked like, so of course I couldn't agree.

**14th Jan:** Asked for confirmation from Helen Mundy of the changes to the smaller design, no response.

**23rd January:** Finally had an email from Ken Lees containing photo's of the stained glass panels. The larger one looked great. The smaller one looked like someone had just chopped off the bottom third of the original image and said "there you go".

**4th Feb:** I sent to Andy Hill, the to-scale drawings of what I'd expected for the four sizes of panel, querying why the original design had not been properly resized. He said they'd produced what Everest had sent through.

**5th Feb:** I sent to Ken Lees, Robbie Yapp, Robyn Drury, Helen Mundy, the to-scale drawings of what I'd expected for the four sizes of panel, requesting that they be used to produce the panels correctly.

**21st Feb:** I was told by Mr Lees that what had been produced “I think they look good, but may I suggest that we install the windows and see what you think, I am sure you will be happy with the result.”  
This felt to me like just wanting to get it out of the way - after all, I’m the one that has to live with them. If they’re *wrong*, they’re *wrong*. Having the windows installed certainly wasn’t going to make that go away and I’m not so naïve to believe it would ever be fixed later.  
I wasn’t willing to allow this to happen, as my expectation is that if I did, there would be a lot of contract waving and wailing saying “the contract has been fulfilled”, leaving me with something I didn’t want. Plus, this is only 50% of the total so I’d have to live with what was wrong and still come back for the rest in about 18 months.  
I’d seen no progress, so I asked to cancel. I was told that that wasn’t possible as I’d “signed a contract”. Surely if Everest are unable to provide what was agreed in a reasonable time, then the customer should be allowed to say “enough is enough”?..

### **March 2014**

**3rd March:** As there had really been no progress since January, I stated in an email to Ken Lees, Robbie Yapp, Robyn Drury, Helen Mundy, stating:  
*“Given that there has been no significant response to my last email of 22nd February, I shall have to assume Everest has no interest in progressing this forwards. Therefore, should I not receive a satisfactory offer for resolution by Friday 7th March, I would request that this project/order be canceled.”*  
I received no response.

### **July 2014**

**3rd July:** Received an unexpected email from Ken Lees (cc’d Yvonne Mansfield, Nick Flanagan) saying “Your windows are still in our warehouse waiting for you to arrange an installation date”.  
I asked for a discount for all the hassle that dealing with Everest had caused, Mr Lees stated “There is no justification in reducing your outstanding balance”.  
Later, a rather terse email “We have a legal contract and I would like to fulfil this. If you refusing to accept my offers of help and resisting the installation you will leave me no option but to pass your file on to our legal department.”  
The ‘help’ he described here was sending out an alternative surveyor, which I felt was completely unnecessary as all necessary designs had been supplied back in February.  
I don’t see why there should be any need to “get legal”, when all the problems have been caused by the internal processes of Everest.

All I’d wanted since *January*, was for Everest to produce the smaller stained glass designs with the correct to-scale drawings I had provided, after it was apparent they’d messed up, or if that was not possible, the option to cancel and find an alternative supplier.  
The fact that the whole process seems to be an unstoppable force seems to me completely bizarre and somewhat insane!

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