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Greater clarity

Following its acquisition of Bransom Retail Systems, jewellery industry software provider Clarity & Success is gearing up for a busy 2020. Ruth Faulkner reports

Arguably one of the trade's bigger stories in 2019 has been the acquisition of Bransom Retail Systems by fellow jewellery industry software provider Clarity & Success in June. While acquisitions in the business world are commonplace, they are markedly less frequent when it comes to jewellery retail software, not least because in the UK there were, until June of this year, only three main players in the market. Following the news of the acquisition on June 14, this was reduced to just two, leaving the newly combined Clarity & Success and Bransom operation and nearest competitor Pursuit as the two main players in the market.

At the time of acquisition, Clarity & Success said it hoped to bring "fresh impetus" to Bransom Retail Systems, by providing jewellery and watch retailers with a "comprehensive portfolio of software innovations and related products". Fresh from a successful appearance at International Jewellery London (IJL) in September, when both the Bransom and Clarity & Success teams appeared as one to talk to existing clients and meet with potential new customers – and just over three months on from the acquisition – the business is looking forward to the future.

"The show was absolutely amazing for us," says Clarity & Success managing director Karen Russell, referencing the recent IJL event. "Traditionally we [Clarity & Success] haven't done many IJLs, so we weren't too sure what to expect.

"But because of the acquisition we felt that of course we should be there and saw it more as a networking opportunity to be able to meet with people, particularly the Bransom customers to satisfy them that nothing was really going to drastically change in the short term."

So what has altered for Bransom customers since the acquisition and what further changes will we see now that both businesses have been brought together?

"Our intention when we started negotiations with Chris Garland



Clarity's software supports repairs and servicing

[Bransom's former managing director] was not to come in like a venture capitalist and basically say, 'Right, that's it – we've bought the customer base so we will now cut off all Bransom customers and throw out their existing software,'" explains Russell.

"To a great extent, Chris had recognised that his business needed to develop its current software in order for it to continue to be a strong market player in the future. He could see that the development costs and the time scope were astronomical, and ultimately it made much more sense to be acquired by a company that already had this in place."

According to Russell, had the acquisition not happened, Bransom would have been developing a brand-new software offering and rolling that out to its customers in the next five years anyway.

"All we have done is come in and make that new software available now," she explains. "So the customers who

feel that they do need to modernise their business or who feel they want to look at the alternatives that different software can bring to their business are able to do that immediately."

Russell is quick to reassure existing Bransom customers who are happy with their current Bsmart software package that this will be retained for the foreseeable future. ▶

"For many Bransom customers it is very much business as usual"

Karen Russell
Clarity & Success



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“We want to introduce new products that will make [customers’] businesses more profitable”
Karen Russell
Clarity & Success

“We’re not forcing people to move over,” she says. “The Bransom programmer has been retained and he will continue to maintain and enhance the Bsmart system for those customers who wish to carry on using it. So for many Bransom customers it is very much business as usual.”

To that end, Bransom’s office in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, has been retained, giving the company a UK-wide presence with bases in both Staffordshire (the location of the Clarity & Success UK head office) and in Hemel Hempstead with a further member of staff based in Manchester.

The teams from both operations have also been retained with what Russell describes as “certain work processes being amalgamated”.

“All of the existing Bransom staff are being fully trained on the Clarity software, so it’s an even stronger support team,” she adds.

The Bransom name and logo continue to exist for ease of transition, but as of January 1, 2020, this will all be enveloped under the Clarity & Success umbrella. Bsmart and Bransom’s associated products will remain, but as part of the Clarity stable.

“It makes no sense running two separate companies and two sets of accounts going forward,” explains Russell. “It makes sense to pool everything like that under one company.”

So that’s the housekeeping elements associated with bringing two companies together dealt with. But the question

Clarity & Success offers customers downloadable apps for repairs and mobile point of sale

remains, what does the acquisition mean for those Bransom customers who might be open to a move away from their current Bsmart system?

Since the acquisition, Clarity & Success has surveyed all of the Bransom customers to better understand their software needs. Russell describes the findings of the survey as “extremely interesting”. Of particular note was the answer to the question, ‘Would you consider a move to Clarity & Success?’ Some 73% of respondents said ‘yes’ – which Russell is very pleased about.

“How this acquisition has been perceived by the Bransom customer base is important to me. We want it to be a positive thing for them,” she says. “We want to be able to introduce new products and a more modern software that will make their businesses more profitable.”

Russell says customers are asking for a software system that will give them reportability and visibility, as you would expect, and crucially, for a jewellery industry provider, the ability to document and track internal service provisions such as bespoke work, repairs and remodelling.

“We have got an extremely strong repair system,” she explains. “People have been impressed by that, as well as by the apps we have introduced for each area of our Evolution software. They’re all full apps and they can be downloaded onto any Android or iOS device

– so that includes iPads, iPad Minis, even smartphones. This means you can exponentially increase the number of workplaces that you have without cost, because this is something we don’t charge for. There is a mobile point-of-sale app, which helps with queue busting at busy times, as well as a repair app, which again shows the strength of our repair business.”

Welcome news to those customers wishing to switch to Clarity & Success is that they can now keep their historic Bsmart data, if they require it – which would not have been possible when switching from Bransom to Clarity prior to the acquisition.

Russell is aware that pre-Christmas isn’t an ideal time for retailers to start changing software provider but assures *Retail Jeweller* that she and the team can start making the necessary changes now, in order to make the switchover as seamless as possible come the new year.

“In the background we can do an awful lot of planning with those customers who have already indicated that they would like to move,” she explains. “So that in the new year, 80% of the work is done.”

A busy 2020 is undoubtedly on the cards for Clarity & Success. Russell is looking forward to the new year with enthusiasm. “These are systems that can manage your entire business on a daily basis,” she says. “I really want to educate people about what they can do with them and show people the real value of what we are offering.” And now, since the acquisition, she has a much bigger pool of retailers to educate. ●

