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Adding value to leather goods

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Both customers and consumers need to be fully satisfied with services and products that they receive. For many customers in the higher-value leather product sector the uniqueness within the design of the product is paramount. This can be in the fine detail of the design, or the artisanship employed as the leathergoods are made. However, it can also be found in other aspects of refinement, especially when the objective is to achieve individuality in the eyes of the customer. This can be a complex matter, but there are ways in which a customer can obtain a bespoke item at a cost that is reasonable, but also provides reward to those within the value chain.

Waterstain follows the concept of producing a range of dyeing compounds that can be applied within finishing operations for crust leathers. This means that a limited range of dyeing on crust leathers can be refined within finishing to produce a wide number of shades. With a relatively small pallet of crust leathers, a wide and vibrant range of leathers, in shade and texture, can be produced. This service can be very flexible as the reaction time to a request is normally rapid, and the technology can be applied to very small productions runs. Moreover, these leathers can be both attractive and uniform, and naturally can be further individualised as footwear, bags, leather belts and other types of leathergoods.

Another way of customising products in a most spectacular way is to pay attention to the cut edge of leathers. Cut edges often show the basic colour of the tanned leather where dyes have not penetrated. Where dye penetration is complete, then the colour more or less corresponds with the shade of the finished leather, but with a dull or suede appearance at the edge of cut sections. However, section lacquers offer new alternatives in leathergoods manufacture. In this event the cut section is carefully treated to achieve a delicate finish to the leather edge. This is immediately noticeable in the finished leathergoods as an edge of different or complementary colour: it may be matt in effect, but can also be spectacular as a high-gloss finish.

Often these special effects are destined for top fashion brands, where exclusivity is taken to be the norm. In these particular applications a very small quantity of finishing product can significantly raise the value of crust leathers and finished goods. Moreover, these enhancements need not be at the expense of performance; products will still be able to meet high demands in terms of wet and dry rub fastness and resistance to sweat and stains.

Finally, there is the concept of care for that cherished leather item. In particular, where garments have been subjected to dry cleaning the solvents used often alter the character and handle of the leather. However, products are available, when applied to leathers using the correct techniques, that can restore the aesthetic properties of the leather to almost its original condition. Naturally, this needs a special understanding of leather and leather products that is often missing when products are being sold and in maintenance treatments.

Finally, there are often shortcomings in both packaging and labelling in the leather care sector, and in particular expert knowledge is required in supermarkets and retail chains' stores. There is a need for constant feedback from the sales point back upstream along the value chain to stay ahead of the game. ☺

A delicate finish to the leather edge enhances the look of a high-end leather bag.

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