

MANAGING DIRECTOR, US

Plain English Design Ltd

About Plain English:

Plain English designs and makes bespoke kitchens and cupboards by hand in our workshop at Stowupland Hall in Suffolk, England, for clients in the UK, the US and beyond. We have showrooms in New York and Los Angeles. Our work is known for its quiet, considered design and for the quality of the making. The US business is now at the point where it needs a full-time leader of its own.

The role:

We are looking for a Managing Director to lead Plain English in the US. Reporting to the two owners, you will be the most senior person in the US business and responsible for its performance, its people and its reputation. You will set the direction for the US, lead the heads of design and business development, work closely with our global operations team, and make sure every project is designed, sold and delivered to the standard Plain English is known for.

The Heads of Design and Business Development run their departments day to day and report to the Managing Director, who leads them as one team, agrees their objectives, owns the US numbers and steps in personally wherever the business needs its most senior person. Operations is a global role reporting to the Finance Director and works closely with the Managing Director on everything in the US.

This is a hands-on leadership role in a small, close team. The right person will be as comfortable reviewing a kitchen scheme with a designer or walking a client through the showroom as they are with a sales forecast or a budget.

Location: New York (51 East 10th Street), with regular time in Los Angeles. Strong candidates based in Los Angeles will be considered.

Hours: Full time. Occasional evening and weekend work for events and client commitments.

Travel: Regular travel within the US between the New York and Los Angeles showrooms and to client sites where senior presence is needed, and periodic trips to the UK head office and workshop in Suffolk.

Reports to: Katie Fontana and Tony Niblock, Owners

What you will do:

Leadership of the US business

- Set the direction and priorities for Plain English in the US and represent the owners in the US day-to-day.
- Lead, develop and hold accountable the Heads of Design and Business Development, running regular one-to-ones, setting clear objectives and carrying out annual reviews.
- Hire, train and develop the team with the department Heads, and build the structure the US business needs for its next stage of growth.
- Build a culture where a small team does its best work: clear expectations, good communication and a shared pride in the product.
- Keep the owners and the UK leadership close to what is happening in the US, so the US and UK operate as one company.

Sales and commercial performance

- Own the annual US sales target and the US budget, agreeing both with the owners and Finance Director each year and delivering against them.
- Run the weekly sales check in and monthly review with the Head of Design, tracking leads, pipeline, forecasting and conversion, and stepping in early where a designer or a project is off track.
- Lead from the front on the largest and most complex enquiries, joining client meetings and sales conversations where senior presence will help close the project.
- Develop the US sales strategy with the Head of Design, including a sales playbook for the designers to work from.
- Own pricing and margin on US projects and approve discounts and commercial concessions within limits agreed with the owners.
- Make sure the sales and marketing team have the tools, pricing, specifications and training they need to market and sell Plain English well.

Design standard

- Set and protect the design standard for Plain English in the US, reviewing key schemes before they go to clients and making sure the work reflects the brand as Katie and Tony have defined it.

Clients and reputation

- Be the senior point of contact for clients, architects and interior designers on the largest projects, and the person they can escalate to when a relationship needs senior attention.
- Build a team that is trusted and equipped to resolve client issues itself, stepping in when a project needs senior or company level attention.
- Take ownership of client escalations, complaints and disputes, agreeing the company position with the owners and Finance Director and seeing them through to resolution.
- Be present in the US design community, building and strengthening relationships with architects, designers and trade partners to grow the client base.

Showrooms and marketing

- Take overall responsibility for the New York and Los Angeles showrooms, through the Head of Design and the showroom teams, making sure they are staffed, presented and run to the standard the brand demands.
- Work with the Head of Business Development on trade initiatives, including showroom events, press visits and industry events, and represent Plain English at the highest level across the US.
- Work closely with the Head of Business Development to align and set strategy for marketing programming and lead generation across the US and UK.

Finance and people

- Work with the Finance Director on budgets, cash, deposits and collection of final balances, making sure the US team has the tools it needs, and review the monthly US management accounts together.
- Keep US costs under control, approving spend in line with the agreed budget.
- Act as the senior point of authority in the US on people matters, working with the Finance Director and our US HR and payroll providers.

Growth

- Develop and implement a long term growth plan for the US with the owners, including exploring additional revenue streams and potential showroom expansion.
- Carry out regular market research to identify emerging and growing US markets, to guide business development and growth.

What we are looking for:

- A track record of leading a design and sales team at the top end of the market, in bespoke kitchens, joinery, furniture, interiors or a comparable luxury product, ideally including the US market.
- Experience of running a showroom, studio or business unit with responsibility for its revenue and its people, not only its creative output.
- A real understanding of design and of how a bespoke product is made, so that you can hold the Plain English standard and earn the respect of a team of designers.
- Confident with clients, architects and interior designers at the top end of the market.
- Someone who runs towards problems, is comfortable with difficult conversations, and can hold a line with a client or supplier without losing the relationship.
- Organised and numerate, comfortable with forecasts, budgets and the practicalities of getting a project through a workshop 3,000 miles away.
- Knowledge of both the UK and US design markets is strongly preferred, and the ability to work across time zones with a UK head office is essential.
- Right to work in the US.

Package:

A competitive salary and performance related bonus, with details on application.

How to apply:

Please send a CV and a short covering note to hiring@plainenglishdesign.com. We will review applications as they arrive and expect to hold first interviews in October.