

innovations

Focusing on innovation in the global cruise industry

Panache Cruises invests
in more office space -
looks to the future



Special Report
International Cruise Ship Industry

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Panache's rebuilt office suite in Chorley, UK

Towards the end of last year, the rebuilding of luxury cruise ship agency Panache Cruises headquarters in Chorley (Lancashire, UK), was completed on time and within budget.

In what is thought to be a first for a cruise retail business, the project saw extensive use of ship building materials as part of the construction work.

The project involved the conversion of three separate offices into one expansive working and recreation space.

Designed by architectural services firm, Elizabeth George, the new Panache Cruises head office will accommodate the company's rapidly growing team, which has more than doubled in the past 12 months and is projected to hit 100 in the near future, aiming to be the world's leading retailer of luxury cruises by 2030.

The project saw the extensive use of shipping materials that are more commonly deployed in the marine and the offshore industries sourced from Hampshire-based Temprotech,,

A range of specialist materials were used in Panache Cruises' commercial office environment to protect flooring, doorways, walls and furniture.



Panache Cruises' Founder and CEO, James Cole

James Cole, Founder and CEO, Panache Cruises, explained: "When visiting the stunning new ship 'Oceania Vista' before its official launch earlier last year, I spotted some materials that were being used to protect the ship's new interiors.

"I was so impressed with the quality that I made a note of the company name with a view to using similar products for



Panache believes in face-to-face meetings and as a result has built a dedicated meeting space.

our forthcoming office refurbishment project. That company turned out to be a UK based supplier of materials to the marine sector called Temprotech.

“In addition to protecting our existing floor and wall coverings, we have used an edge protector to prevent damage to doorways and new furniture. Interestingly, the certified flame retardancy of their protection materials, which is a necessity in the marine industry, proved invaluable in protecting various areas from sparks that were created during the steel fabrication work.

“We have been very impressed with the results and many of these materials can be reused as well which was an important environmental consideration for us. Easy and quick to deploy due to the self-adhesive nature of each product, our builders have been incredibly impressed with the quality too,” he said.

Commenting on the products supplied, Andrew Nicholson, Temprotech’s Sales Director, said: “Although primarily designed for cruise, ferry and superyacht outfitting, our surface protection products can also be used in non-marine applications. Due to their advanced capabilities, flame retardant properties and environmental credentials, our range of materials are also perfectly suited for commercial building projects.

“This is especially true when expensive floor and wall coverings need to be protected from dirt, spillages, foot traffic and accidental damage. Our products are perfect for this and our edge protection products ensure doorways, handrails and furniture with vulnerable edges cannot be harmed. Of course, where steel fabrication and hot-works are required, our flame retardant products provide total peace of mind.

“We were delighted to be in a position to help the team at Panache Cruises. Given their growing stature in the luxury cruise sector, an industry in which we are also heavily involved, their use



The use of flame retardant materials has become paramount.

of marine focused products seemed only fitting,” he said at the time of the announcement.

Cole added, “One of Panache Cruises’ fundamental values is to look after our staff and to provide the very best work environment possible. Our office refurbishment project is an integral part of our ongoing commitment to our fantastic team of people. When finished, our new office space will truly reflect Panache Cruises’ stature as the ‘Best Workplace In Travel’, an award that we are incredibly proud to have won earlier last year.”

Temprotech specialises in supplying temporary protection materials to assist shipowners, operators, yards, contractors and outfitters in the continued drive towards total protection and fire safety.

Long experience

Based in Hampshire in the UK, the company has more than 30 years of experience in the supply of protection materials that meet the exacting demands of the global cruise, ferry, naval and mega-yacht shipbuilding, shiprepair and offshore markets.

Protection materials range from simple polyethylene sheeting through to heavy-duty rubber or high-density foam panels, rolls or sheets of polypropylene, woven glass-fibre fabrics with various coatings or laminations, scrim-reinforced sheet, adhesive tapes and films or cellular protection boards and bespoke die-cut protection boxes.

All of Temprotech's materials are flame retardant but can be enhanced with additional properties; anti-static, halogen-free, clean-peel, UV resistant, self-adhesive, anti-slip and custom print, the company claimed.

Talking with ICSI, Panache Cruises' Andy Hayward, said that apart from the refurbishment work, which involved several marine products supplied by Temprotech, various fittings were used that are found on cruise ships. For example, a teak decking solution was used to clad several pillars and to create feature walls.

Maximising the flow of natural light through the new office space was a key element of the build. This was undertaken with many lessons learned from cruise ship interior design. For example, the extensive use of floor to ceiling glass panels. Interior window

films were also introduced to provide context and to help direct the flow of natural light.

All artificial lighting was designed to minimise the effects of seasonal affected disorder (SAD) and blue colour schemes and blue lighting were integrated to help combat this omnipresent problem.

The focus was very much on the health and well-being of the team, Hayward advised.

Panache Cruises already occupied one suite at Strawberry Fields prior to the extension project. Two more large office suites were acquired and the company then embarked upon a design and build project to merge the space into one large office. The new space is expansive and allowing Panache to keep pace with its growth plans over the coming years.

Face-to-face meetings

Panache champions face-to-face meetings. "We fundamentally believe that good customer service is based on personal interaction and the best way to build rapport and get to know your customers is on a physical level," Hayward explained.

"This is why our programme of



Office display

Founders cruises is a key part of our loyalty programme. Anyone who is a member of the programme can join our Founder James Cole on a selection of cruises throughout the year.

“This enables James to meet face to face with our customers. This provides the ideal environment in which to find out what our customers would like to see from us in the future. It also allows us to thank our most loyal customers in person,” he said.

Speaking about luxury cruise ship destinations, Hayward said that the Galapagos continued to be a major draw for people from around the world, as do the Arctic and the Antarctic. There is also growing interest in both Iceland and Greenland. More established regions for exploration include the wilds of Alaska and Patagonia.

“The pandemic has only served to boost people’s wanderlust. All those cancelled holidays during lockdown have meant that people are now looking to travel further afield on longer itineraries, which visit the destinations that they most want to visit.

“Getting to those ‘bucket list’ destinations has become more important for many people, as I think the pandemic has reminded us all that life is just too short. The opportunity to make

lasting memories on ‘once in a lifetime’ type itineraries has become more important in the post-pandemic world,” Hayward said.

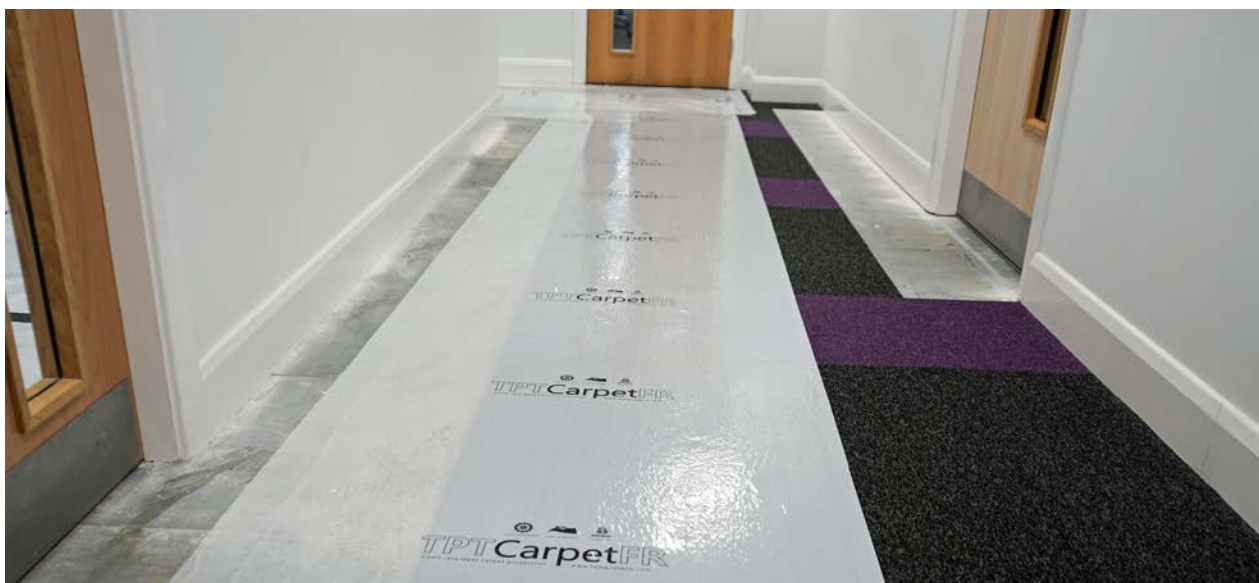
Some cruise ship operators have had to switch itineraries recently, due to geopolitical, weather related and/or port saturation problems.

Hayward said: “There can be a number of reasons why an itinerary may be changed at short notice. The weather is just one factor, which cruise lines have to take into account.

“Interestingly, smaller ships don’t have the same physical limitations that the largest cruise ships have. They can access smaller ports of call, which larger ships simply cannot access. This provides much greater flexibility when planning alternative routes.

“I think it’s also important to point out that people on expedition cruises expect there to be changes in the itinerary – it’s all part of the adventure. Many cruise ship captains will exploit opportunities in the weather as they arise to visit off the beaten areas track as well.

“For example, an expedition cruise ship captain might spot a pod of whales or dolphins and alter course to offer passengers a truly amazing encounter. Smaller ships are much



Temprotech carpet protection



Renovation underway

more manoeuvrable. They can access shallower water safely and can heave to much faster,” he said.

He added: “A specialist cruise agent will always manage the expectations of its customers. Effective communication and the transfer of knowledge are key aspects of selling cruises. The chances of an itinerary change increase significantly outside of the peak times but even during high season changing weather patterns can exert pressure on operators.”

As for the company, Panache Cruises was founded by James Cole in early 2020 at the start of the pandemic. The key members of the team all have extensive backgrounds in cruise retail operations and have previously worked with him as part of his extensive cruise retail career which extends over 25 years.

US expansion

Panache entered the US market in July, 2023. The company has an office in Austin, Texas and a small team of people who are US based and envisages that this team will grow quickly in the coming year or two.

Speaking with Temprotech’s Andy Nicholson and Russell Deere, ICSI was told that the company supplies

protection materials to cruise lines, shipyards, contractors and outfitters in the cruise, ferry, naval, offshore and megayacht markets worldwide.

Obviously, the use of material depends on the job in hand but cruise and ferry operators are tending to increase the workload on their annual or biennial refits, some of which are driven by regulatory reasons, while always seeking to improve the guest experience on board.

Refit activity has been on the increase since COVID when, for obvious reasons, only the bare minimum was done. Importantly, the scale of refurbishment undertaken during drydockings is increasing, as the cruise fleet is being revitalised in 2024/25.

This seems to be the driving force behind increased refit involvement.

It was explained that manufacturing partners are primarily based in UK and Northern Europe. Where possible, Temprotech will supply direct from the manufacturer to limit handling and freight requirements. Stocks are held in the UK, bonded warehousing in Miami and with distributors within Scandinavia, Southern Europe and North America.

The overwhelming majority of materials

are despatched via road haulage and seafreight - although cruise lines tend to arrange collection via their own dedicated logistics partners, as materials can be consolidated with other items destined for the drydocking.

Smaller orders can be supplied via international courier. Only rarely has the company had to resort to airfreight or dedicated 'Man+Van' delivery vehicles to meet a customer's urgent requirement or delivery deadline.

Temprotech was established in 2002 to supply shipyards and contractors in the UK Naval shipbuilding and repair programme.

New products

During this time, many new products were developed and were instrumental in raising awareness and understanding of the need for temporary protection and also the importance of using certified flame retardant products in commercial ship yards.

More stringent health & safety and Insurance requirements in shipyards

were a driving force for the widespread interest and adoption of flame retardant temporary protection being as common and widespread as it is today.

New protection materials or systems tend to have been developed in response to application requirements (solving a customer's specific problem) or in a drive to create a superior product, ie; with as many desirable characteristics as possible. However, all of the products do need to achieve an appropriate and recognised Flame Retardancy Certification.

Warehousing space in Hampshire, UK was doubled a few years ago to keep up with the level and immediacy of demand. Similarly, the managed stockholding in bonded warehousing in Miami has increased.

"We are always open to the possibility of new regional or sector specific distributors as long as they fit our existing network and can match our passion for protection," they concluded.

For more information visit www.panachecruises.com.

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