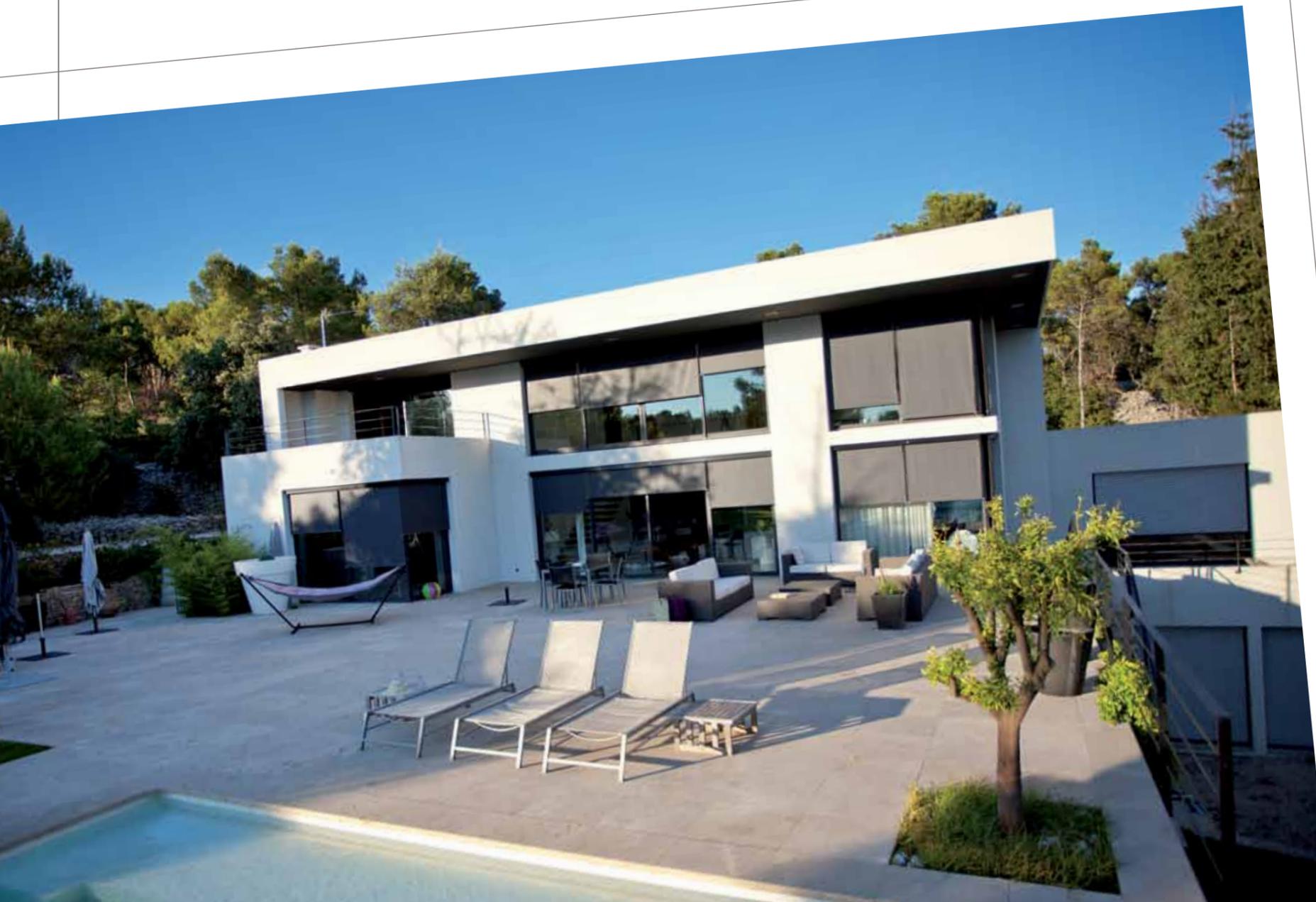


MOTORISATION IS BECOMING AVAILABLE TO A MASS MARKET AFTER SOMFY INTRODUCED SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER PRICE POINTS FOR ITS RANGE LAST YEAR. **DAWN ADAMS REPORTS.**

SPREADING THE WORD ON AFFORDABLE AUTOMATION



The 'Affordable Automation' campaign run by Somfy last year is an initiative designed to grow sales of motorisation solutions. With motors priced 20 to 30 per cent less than their previous price points, the category is more accessible to a wider audience and is shedding its image of exclusivity.

"We've sacrificed margin to grow volume," says Alistair Grice, market manager specifications, high-end residential and electrical channels.

Marleine Gerges, recently appointed market manager for wholesale, retail and end user channels, agrees.

"There was a real misconception in the market with consumers seeing motorisation as extremely expensive and only for the very rich," she says. "Now, more people can consider having motorisation in their homes; they can afford to do it."

The company anticipates a 30 per cent year-on-year growth in motor sales is achievable as the lower price points make the category more affordable for a broader market base. And a marked rise in the take-up of these products has been growing, particularly from July last year.

SALES INCREASE

"It took around three months for people to get their heads around the new pricing and what we were offering," Gerges says. "After July, we saw growth month-on-month. People began to understand they could grow the market."

Critical to the initiative's success is communicating the lower prices to consumers, using techniques such as point-of-sale information. Grice highlights the benefits when sales consultants pass on information that, for example, \$299 is an entry point for a hardwired motor. "If consumers aren't told, they won't buy it," Grice says.

To build interest in the campaign and create additional sales, the company introduced the Somfy Cup last year, a program it will repeat in 2012. "It is a trade competition that rewards individual sales people on the retail sales teams for their commitment to selling motorisation," Grice says. Sales people were invited to record online the sales they secured to be eligible for a lucky draw; three iPads and 20 \$100 vouchers were given away each month during the six-month competition.

INCENTIVE

"For Somfy, a lot of our relationship is with the business owners or the sales manager so this was about spreading our reach," he says. Yet another reward was designed specifically for Somfy Automation Specialists with the prize a trip for two to the recent R+T Stuttgart.

In 2012, the company intends adding value to being a Somfy Automation Specialist with 200 currently operating in Australia and New Zealand. "We want to grow our base of people loyal to Somfy and engage them on home automation," Gerges says. "We want to keep growing and changing and to find out what else we can do for them to grow their businesses; it's about a partnership."

Somfy was also involved in its first consumer showcase at Grand Designs at Darling Harbour in Sydney last year where Grice says visitors were commenting that they already had the motors in their homes and were pleased with the results. "There was a real understanding from people about how these products make their life much easier," he says. "As a company, we want to promote that message so retailers are empowered to take it to consumers." Over three days, some 19,000 people attended the event. "They were engaged consumers who were thinking of building or renovating," says Gerges.

Grice also confirms advertising targeted to consumers will continue to be a part of the Somfy strategy to ensure the message about its products and their accessibility is relayed to end consumers.

IMPRESSIVE TOWER

An impressive list of commercial projects choosing Somfy motors include the recently completed Westfield Tower and shopping centre in the Sydney CBD. Some 700 Somfy motors were installed in the tower and another 30 to 40 in the shopping centre. In yet another project, 123 Albert Street in Brisbane, 1200 motors with the Animeo control system were installed.

As well as providing motorisation solutions for new buildings, retrofitting older premises is proving a growing trade. "We're working on a project at 201 Elizabeth Street in Sydney which is a tower that was built in 1978," says Alistair Grice, market manager specification, high-end residential and electrical channels. "It has 38 storeys and we're involved in upgrading the blinds with motorisation through a building management system that includes lighting and heating and ventilation."

Grice says work on existing buildings is being driven by NABERS, a performance-based rating system, as well as new rules on mandatory disclosure on the energy efficiency of properties over 2000 square metres. "A lot of government departments won't accept a building under four star," he says.

In another initiative, a Somfy Electrical Services division was established last year to enable the company to complete any wiring required for its products. Initially offered for the commercial and the residential markets in Sydney, plans are to expand this service at a later date.

"The commercial building market is performing quite strongly and there are much higher performing buildings now," Grice says. "We are investing in that part of the market with, for example, my position as market manager." Also recently employed is sales engineer Harshad Barve, a Masters qualified mechanical engineer, whose role will be to advise how best to achieve goals.

"At the moment, our short term growth is in new building stock," Grice says. "Long term, our growth will be about bringing existing build stock up to standard."

SHHHH....ULTRA QUIET

Somfy is establishing a new standard with its ultra quiet motor, the Sonesse 40 which was introduced in September last year. "We're not asking people to pay more for this product; this is the new standard," says Alistair Grice, market manager specification, high-end residential and electrical channels. "And it is being taken up commercially; the Westfield Tower has 700 Sonesse motors. When people have this type of product at their workplace, we expect they'll want the same quiet experience in their homes."

Available for the residential market is the Roll-up Wirefree RTS, a battery operated motor that does not require an electrician for its installation. This motor has been relaunched with a repositioned pricing at under \$300, a significant reduction from its previous \$500 price point. "It's about being able to offer entry levels motors for a mass market," Grice says.

Also in the Somfy stable is a new curtain track offer whose motor features a manual override, ensuring that the limits are not damaged if the curtain is pulled; a soft start and soft stop feature for a pleasing visual effect when used; and touch motion ensuring the remote is not needed for activation.

