

## Case study: Excel Stairs

### With Staircon, There's Nothing That Excel Stairs Cannot Do

EXCEL  STAIRS

#### Summary

Excel Stairs is a traditional family business that has pushed its way to the forefront of digital design, and the top step of the luxury staircase market. Today it can create almost unlimited designs, turn artistic concepts into perfect and practical staircase geometry, and help exacting clients to interact with their evolving designs in 3D. Staircon from Elecosoft helps it deliver at every stage of the process from design through to production.



The staircase is the heart of any property – that's what Paul Elkin of Excel Stairs will tell you. He should know, he's been designing and building them for 40 years.

Excel Stairs is a family firm built on the very best traditions of craftsmanship, but which has truly embraced the digital age.

Today it spans the staircase sector. It delivers any kind of staircase project from a state-of-the-art 12,000 square foot factory, equipped with three CNC machines, and is expert in digital design.

From some of the biggest and most complex staircases in the world, right down to the plain old straight domestic flight, Excel Stairs can and does produce it all. When developers want a staircase that can help sell a property, they will often pick up the phone to Paul to harness his vast experience. It

is increasingly known, however, for its designs for the high-end, luxury and often celebrity market. One reason it has been so successful at penetrating this lucrative niche is the fact that its design and production processes are supported by Staircon, augmenting the core skills of trained craftspeople.

#### Delivering dreams

When it comes to staircases, Paul and his team help make their clients' dreams come true – "There's nothing we cannot do" he says. Staircon not only helps the delivery but also supports

engagement with the client, right through the process. He explained: "With the aid of Staircon, we'll make an outline presentation to catch initial interest. Then the client may come in or go online to interact with the design process. We allow them to make changes, and they can see a fairly accurate visualisation of what we're proposing. Staircon enables them to get involved in their project and shows them a model that is truly realistic."

He believes that the software helps clients to feel that their ideas are achievable, saying: "Clients find it an awesome challenge to design a staircase, and getting hands-on helps make them feel relaxed that I have the solution to their problem. People considering spending a lot on a construction project want to be confident that they will get exactly what they want in terms of stairs – and, unfortunately, sometimes other people

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don't deliver. You can get away with a lot on the wider development, but a staircase is quite unforgiving. It is either perfect or it's rubbish."

### Driving efficiency

Excel Stairs leverages all the benefits that Staircon can deliver. It has three licences and four users across the sales and design office and factory. Paul himself drives the production data for the factory, where two further users operate Staircon to push production programmes to the appropriate CNC machine. Paul's daughter is the final user, not just producing drawings but analysing the throughput and connecting production to back office processes such as invoicing.

Staircon directly supports productivity: "Staircon gives me all the information

“ Using Staircon to produce the drawing, the coding and the production data makes everything move through so much quicker, to get the job done. It helps us maintain ultra-high quality. ”

I need to pass on to the production staff, so they know what they are doing. It takes some of the stress and workload from the team and increases their productivity. Close to 80% of the production process now comes directly out of Staircon – that's astronomical from a single programme."

The process has become very streamlined. Now, only two or three individuals from among the 16-strong workforce need be involved in the end-to-end creation of a staircase. That raises concurrency, so the factory can efficiently process multiple production jobs. It often has between six and twelve individual projects running simultaneously.

### Sustaining quality

Paul acknowledges a range of benefits that have come from using the software: "The original reason for automating and pushing the use of Staircon was to allow me to escape from what were often very intense 18-hour days", Paul related. "Now, all our staff are doing what they should be doing, and it is much more efficient overall. Of course, our staff have the craft skills and training to build staircases without the CNCs, but using Staircon to produce the drawing, the coding and the production data makes

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everything move through so much quicker, to get the job done. It helps us maintain ultra-high quality – after all, you're only as good as your last job so every single one has to be outstanding."

### Engineering perfection

Excel Stairs does more than build staircases – Paul believes that they are uniquely able to capture artistic vision and translate it into reality with the aid of precision engineering principles. "Staircase design is the art of capturing the correct geometry. Perfect geometry looks perfect, it glides through from one level to the next. We have often had artists present us with drawings, that we had to make deliverable. When it comes to design, people go off the scale with their imagination. Many of the large producers have restrictions on what they can do – but we don't."

### Unlimited potential

Paul sees a positive future for Excel Stairs as a family concern, into the future. "Staircon has undoubtedly helped us to build our business. We couldn't process this volume of work without it. I couldn't physically draw by hand every project we are now putting through. It is now unlimited, as I can always train more people to use Staircon and take on another licence easily."

The software will continue to help Excel Stairs grow as fast as it wishes. The next generation of the Elkin family is engaged and already wholly committed to explore what digital design and production can deliver. As Paul points out: "Staircon has allowed automation, and automation means it shouldn't demand my personal skills to maintain it in future."

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Staircon: Software for design and manufacture of stairs