



Welcome to the TrustMark e-newsletter

TV Advertising for TrustMark

Most of you will have seen the advertising campaign started by Magnet during October which reached a peak over the Christmas and New Year period. This meant the TrustMark logo was prominently displayed in all the advertisements as well as on a large number of the key television channels at prime time. The newspaper insertions were double page, full page and half page advertisements and appeared in the Telegraph, Daily Mail, Times, Guardian and Daily Express.

Magnet also produced dedicated colour TrustMark adverts in the January issues of 11 home interest magazines, including House Beautiful, BBC Good Homes, Elle Decoration, Homes and Gardens.

Magnets retained 'Full Circle Service' teams are used to install their own kitchens. These organisations were recently reviewed as a 'supply chain development tool' and for compliance with TrustMarks own Core Criteria. Because of this a number of firms who had been used in the past by Magnet were no longer retained.

Benefits for the consumer include the fact that under TrustMarks required 'Insurance Warranty Protection' for work done over £250, consumers' deposits paid at time of order for their kitchens, was now being fully protected.

<http://www.magnet.co.uk/>

Meeting with Government

A recent meeting was held between TrustMark and senior members of BERR (Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform); the purpose was so that TrustMark could present their case for further assistance with publicity and awareness.

This followed the launch at the end of last year of the newly formed TrustMark Consumer Forum at which the Minister - Gareth Thomas was the main speaker.

During the meeting BERR discussed the opportunities for TrustMark to have access to the departments own in-house resources through their Marketing, PR and Media features departments.

Some of the proposals put forward for consideration included:

- Ministers Gareth Thomas and Steven Timms to provide short 'supporting statements' quarterly during 2008 for use in TrustMark Press Releases.
- DBERR through their contacts with the local government community / DCLG / Local Government Task Force (LGTf) are to consider brokering meetings to bring together 'Approved Trader Lists' and TrustMark firms.
- DBERR to broker a meeting with the Director of Communications at the OFT. Purpose is to discuss how they could help TrustMark in getting the correct information and messages out to the consumer.
- Mailshot - Inclusion of a TrustMark Consumer leaflet to a specified consumer group. This could be through a national mailout to vulnerable groups such as the elderly. To minimise costs it could be sent out through existing Government mailshot i.e. Winter Fuels payment letter.
- Exhibition Stand in the reception area of DBERR offices in Victoria Street, Westminster.
- Other ideas on how further assistance can be provided to TrustMark by DBERR's Marketing, PR and Media features departments.

Don't Get Done

The BBC recently approached TrustMark asking them to appear in a new twenty part TV consumer series for BBC 1.

Each programme aims to resolve an issue experienced by a consumer in a wide range of situations. This could be dealing with a problem with a holiday firm, purchase of a car or any other consumer related issue.

in this issue:

TV Advertising for TrustMark

Meeting with Government

Don't Get Done

Home.... Is Where the Heart Is

Consumer Direct - reveals continued reduction

New Look

Getting Tough on Cowboy Builders

New TrustMark Chairman Appointed

National Database Underway

Board Strengthened

WhichTrader?

An Excellent Job - Well Done

Building Control

Cold Caller - Nabbed

The programme TrustMark was asked to appear in, was one dealing with poorly installed electrics in a newly fitted kitchen that had been supplied and fitted by a national retailer, who is not TrustMark approved.

An expert from NAPIT also appeared on the programme, detailing the problems with the installed electrics and they then rectified the problems, ensuring they fully met all the necessary Part P regulations.

TrustMark personnel were interviewed by the presenter Dominic Littlewood who asked about our scheme and the protection it offers to consumers who select a TrustMark registered firm. The series is due out in June of this year but no dates have yet been set for each individual programme.

Home..... Is Where the Heart Is

In the last few weeks, TrustMark has approved two further scheme operators; the national retailer 'Homebase' and 'The UK Consumer Protection Agency', bringing the total to 25 approved TrustMark Scheme Operators.

Homebase has been awarded a license to cover the installation of their Kitchens by their own teams who operate from their three hundred plus stores located around the UK. A national marketing campaign promoting TrustMark is presently being planned by Homebase and this is expected to be seen by the public in the early part of the Spring.

The UK Consumer Protection Agency is a community of independent small to medium sized businesses and consumers dedicated to maintaining high trading standards and the promotion of integrity and professionalism to the RMI sector for work done around the home.

Consumer Direct – reveals continued reduction

Government advice service Consumer Direct, answered more than 1.5 million calls and emails from consumers in 2007 and logged 819,815 complaints on its database, up 18 per cent from the previous year.

Those trades with most complaints included second hand cars, mobile phones and TV's.

There has always been a considerable number of complaints about General Builders but since the establishment of TrustMark in 2005 this positioning has moved from 3rd to 5th place and now it has been announced that in 2007 the number of complaints about General Builders have been reduced yet again, putting them down to 6th position - proportionately a 16% drop.

This continued decrease in complaints for the RMI sector suggests that the increase in monitoring through schemes such as TrustMark and the increase in awareness of monitoring amongst firms and by consumers though our publicity and marketing may be the reason.

For further information see the link:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_072090

New Look

The look of the TrustMark website homepage has remained unchanged for the last 18 months and it was decided we needed a fresh, modern design, covering all trades TrustMark support in the RMI sector.

Three sets of tradesman images were created and these now appear randomly when the site is viewed, ensuring visitors regularly see changing images.

With the various specialist information sections on the Homepage, such as Members Area, News Round Up and Consumer Forum new 'drop down' buttons have also been designed. View online: www.trustmark.org.uk

Getting Tough on Cowboy Builders

The Government is now seeking views on plans to beef up powers for local authorities to tackle illegal or botched building work.

Currently, authorities only have six months from completion of non-compliant work to bring a prosecution for breaches of building regulations and Government has listened to concerns that a longer period is needed to make enforcement more effective, given that defects may not become immediately apparent.

Proposals in the recently published consultation paper increase the time limit in which a prosecution can be brought to two years. Within this period, a prosecution can be brought within six months of discovery of sufficient evidence to prosecute.

Iain Wright, Minister at Communities and Local Government said:

"Local authority building control representatives have stressed the barrier to effective enforcement that the current six months allowed for prosecution can pose - it is not long enough. It is not right that those committing serious breaches and avoiding justified enforcement action are putting themselves and others at health and safety risk".

"They can also be reducing the energy efficiency potential of buildings - everyone should be striving to make buildings as environmentally friendly as possible. A more efficient enforcement regime should prove to be a more effective deterrent to non-compliance, ensuring that unscrupulous and lazy builders cannot benefit at the expense of the

law-abiding majority".

The consultation document is clear that prosecution is aimed at flagrant, wilful or repeated non-compliance not one-off minor failures. The Government wants to ensure a level playing field for industry and these proposals will impose no additional burdens or risk of prosecution for those who comply with Building Regulation requirements.

New TrustMark Chairman Appointed

Having completed his very successful three year term, Ian Livsey, Executive Chairman has now transferred his responsibilities to a newly appointed Non Executive Chairman – Mr Deep Sagar.

Following its successful start up phase, TrustMark is now poised to consolidate its position and continue to grow and Deep's new role is to steer the organisation through the next three years and provide guidance and leadership at board level. The existing board of directors is a balance between industry and consumer interests and Deep's skills bring further strong consumer protection credentials, as well as an understanding of how national standards can improve industry performance.

His background combines management, economic and social development, consultancy and analysis. He worked for over 15 years in senior management for multinationals like Unilever Bestfoods and Coca-Cola internationally. More recently he has been a management consultant, working more closely with the public sector and he has expertise in the not-for-profit and regulated sectors as well.

Presently some of his roles include being chair of LEASE, chair of Turnstone Support and a member of the Parole Board as well as a Commissioner of the National Lottery Commission.

His role with TrustMark provides an excellent opportunity for him to have a positive impact in an area which provides major challenges for every household in the UK when needing good quality reliable tradesmen.

National Database Underway

Following requests from a number of leading consumer protection organisations for easier access to all of TrustMarks approved firms. Following the recent approval by the Board and the Trade Forum, a project is now underway with all of TrustMarks Scheme Operators for them to provide their CSV files of members contact details. This information is being used to build a single 'central database' which will be maintained by TrustMark and updated by the Scheme Operators.

This facility will benefit consumers, member firms and scheme operators, because the customer journey will be made easier, traffic to the site(s) will be dramatically increased through these new consumer protection partnerships and a rise in enquiries to the trade from homeowners will also continue to increase in numbers.

Board Strengthened

An election has recently taken place for a position of a Trade Director on the TrustMark Board. Applicants were requested from within the twenty five scheme operators, resulting in four nominations being put forward.

These were then considered by the Trade Forum at the recent meeting on the 15th January, the resulting votes were very close but the successful candidate was Richard Diment of Federation of Master Builders (FMB).

Richard is currently Director General of the Federation of Master Builders and Managing Director of National Register of Warranted Builders.

His background is as an economist with 30 years experience of working with membership organisations representing their interests to Government, elected representatives, their officials and advisers at the European, UK, devolved administration and local level.

TrustMark are very pleased to have Richard onboard as FMB MasterBond was a founder member of the scheme and presently represent the largest group of licensees with 2850 registered MasterBond TrustMark firms.

Following his election Richard stated he would use his experience, expertise and extensive contacts to promote the scheme in the interests of consumers and licence holders.

WhichTrader?

A new 'Find a Trader Comparator' website is now available to view on www.whichtrader.com.

The site compares and 'scores' 35 existing websites including TrustMark. The analysis is made up of twenty questions detailing checks and standards expected from the schemes. Each organisation featured has been asked to comment on the findings displayed, following analysis of the information detailed on their respective sites.

The purpose of the site is two fold, firstly it provides guidance to any tradesmen or firm who is considering joining a 'Find a Trader' type scheme. Secondly it assists consumers in making an informed decision when considering which 'Find a Trader' site to use when searching for tradesmen.

The site rates TrustMark very highly because of the stringent checks made in-line with our 'Core Criteria'. Many of the sites regrettably have little or no checks made on firms featured and therefore rely on firms just 'subscribing' for a website.

Why not add www.whichtrader.com as a link on your website?

An Excellent Job - Well Done

A recent entrant contacted TrustMarks 'SuperStar Tradesman' regional competition which enables consumers to put forward tradesmen who have carried out good work.

The lady in question, Miss Beck from Romford in Essex entered the competition detailing a TrustMark general builder - Oakleafe Property Services Ltd, who are registered through FMB MasterBond.

The reasons given for their nomination in the SuperStar competition were:

This company went beyond the call of duty when I had a flood to not only reinstate the home I thought I had lost to the ravages of water but take a more caring personal approach to the whole situation.

They helped organise alternative accommodation while the works were being under taken, sheltered my children when we discovered the flood at 2am after returning from a holiday, helped rescue and preserve sentimental items and memorabilia and at times was even a shoulder to cry on.

The whole project from start to finish was smooth and uneventful. They actually made me feel important as I got to make some of the decisions!

Wonderful people, who are a credit to your TrustMark organisation.

Building Control

In the Greater Manchester and Rochdale areas of the country the local authority Building Control Services are currently in the process of printing a leaflet folder for their customers.

The folder cover will display the TrustMark logo and will be used when sending out all building control documents and within the folder they will promote using the Trustmark website and detail the benefits of the scheme so consumers can select approved firms, thereby avoiding cowboy tradesmen.

Cold Caller – Nabbed

An unscrupulous builder who was not associated in any way with any of our Scheme Operators persuaded an elderly Croydon resident to part with more than £11,000 for unnecessary repairs to his property has recently been fined.

Mark Kent failed to appear at Croydon Magistrates' Court in April to answer a summons of failing to give a consumer notice of his rights of cancellation.

In Kent's absence, magistrates heard that he had cold-called at the property and told the resident that he had a couple of loose tiles which he could mend for £18. He then persuaded the resident to have his house re-roofed and asked for a £5,000 cash payment. Further so-called faults were found in the loft which the owner was told would cost £4,000 to rectify. By the time Croydon Trading Standards became involved, a sum in excess of £11,000 had been paid and more money had been requested.

Kent was found guilty of the offence and fined £2,000 with costs awarded of £1,660. A compensation order of £4,000 was also granted.

Contact us

We welcome feedback on all aspects of our work. To contact TrustMark email: enquiries@trustmark.org.uk or write to us at: TrustMark, Englemere, Kings Ride, Ascot, Berkshire. SL5 7TB. Call us on: 0870 163 7373 or fax: 0870 163 1661.

Subscribe

If you do not currently receive the TrustMark e-newsletter on a regular basis and would like to be added to our mailing list, please send your request to enquiries@trustmark.org.uk

Unsubscribe

To unsubscribe from this e-newsletter please send us an email to enquiries@trustmark.org.uk

Data privacy

We wish to reassure you that TrustMark does not share your contact details with any other organisation.

Disclaimer

TrustMark does not accept any responsibility for the content of linked external websites. While all reasonable care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of this newsletter, the publishers cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions. Readers should satisfy themselves as to the correctness or otherwise of any advice, opinions or statements before acting upon them. This publication may be freely copied and/or distributed in its entirety, but not in part.