



Contract
Flooring
Association

Contract Flooring Association

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The president: John Alcock

Things must get a 'damn site better'

I HAVE been involved in the flooring industry for some 20 years or more now and over this time I have witnessed quite a lot of changes of which some have been good, but unfortunately I have also seen some changes for the worse.

On the positive side, I have seen the introduction of solvent-free and low volatile organic compound (VOC) adhesives, which are so much more pleasant and safer to use.

More recently, the introduction of sprayable systems that allow adhesives to be applied from a standing position have been a tremendous progression of convenience. Anything that can get the installer off his knees has to be welcomed.

Of course these spray systems are of far more benefit for large jobs being slightly trickier and not so time-efficient on small installations, but nonetheless a big improvement over hand trowelling.

On the health & safety front I have seen many alleged improvements too, although I still struggle to accept that a flooring contractor has to wear hard hat,

high visibility jacket and gloves, which can be at least an inconvenience and hindrance when carrying out intricate cutting work.

Smoothing compounds have moved on too with the introduction of many that can be now applied from a standing position. Again, wonderful for larger installations and now finally being accepted on smaller jobs.

I have also seen a vast improvement in the provision of training facilities with virtually all manufacturers, as well as FITA, offering training courses for the application of all products.

However, the one area where I have seen little if any significant improvement is in site conditions. I am continually staggered by the site conditions that flooring contractors are forced to work under.

Most new sites remain cold, damp and poorly lit and more closely resemble building sites than premises where flooring contractors should be working.

Only in the last few months was I at a site where pre-cut vinyl, for use in shower modules, was stored on pallets outside and was

soaking wet. No thought had been given to taking the vinyl into the building to get it dry and certainly not to allow it to acclimatise. And we wonder why we experience problems.

I would dearly love to go to a site where the flooring contractor did not have to work around everyone else or – as is so often the case – have to move other people's rubbish out of the way before they can even contemplate starting the installation.

I would so love to turn up on site and see that all the windows are in place and not just some of them and I would so like to arrive to find the underfloor heating system had actually been commissioned and was still not waiting to be connected.

I could go on and on, but I am sure you all know the scenario only too well. Perhaps the only way that we will be able to influence the situation is by continual lobbying of both the main contractors and the government itself.

The CFA has had great success in trying to eliminate retentions, let us hope that we can repeat the success with site conditions.



The chief executive of FITA: Richard Catt

FITA is 'stronger, much improved and FITTER'

FITA forms one of the key elements that allow the CFA and NICF to offer real and tangible benefits to members and the industry.

Delivering something that everyone recognises is vital to continued success, training. Because of this, we continually review FITA and the courses we run to ensure we meet industry needs.

And I am pleased to say that the improvements we have made in recent months have made FITA even stronger, better and – please excuse the pun – FITTER.



As an expression of this, I am delighted to say that many of our courses are becoming more and more popular, with commercial vinyl heading the table at the moment to the extent that we have put new dates on the FITA calendar and website:

www.fita.co.uk

The short training courses we run offer an ideal opportunity to contractors to bring essential and enhanced skills into their workforce that would otherwise

take much longer to develop without the firm foundation FITA offers.

They provide a way that contractors can bring flexibility in to their teams to respond to market demands. Certainly at the moment there seems to be a need for commercial and safety vinyl fitters, which we are able to help contractors to respond to with trained installers.

It's also been an exciting time for sponsors with new relationships for ming all the time. Most recently we have

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