



Comment

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The president: John Alcock

Who are you calling 'old farts' if you just sit on the sidelines?

AFTER my long association with the CFA, nearly 20 years, and now being at the wrong end of my career, I will at last have to honestly admit that some people's impression of the CFA is that it's either an old boys' club or worse, just full of old farts.

It would be wrong for me to dismiss this completely, because the reality is that the only people, who put the time and effort into the Association, tend to be the older members.

Many within the young blood of the industry either won't get involved or sit silently in the wings in judgment and conclude, through their inaction, that it's all of the above.

The truth is that for many, membership may be about the kudos of having the CFA logo on their van, hopefully reaping some commercial advantage from the image and prestige it brings, without the motivation to join in and participate.

A good example is the regional meetings; nobody ever comes to these except the old school and, despite it being the 'Contract' Flooring Association, the majority of those that turn up are manufacturers and not the people you want to help and assist and what the CFA is essentially there for.

Of course time is an issue and this is often cited as a reason for membership apathy and I have to agree here that pressure on our time is an issue for us all. Equally I often get feedback about the topics that are covered and how relevant they are in terms of priority to the installations frequently undertaken and these may be good or bad.

But this is your industry and on which your incomes and futures depend. Its success and development is linked to your input and getting involved in an organisation that can positively

'If you choose not to get involved you give up your right to moan'

shape the industry's future should be a priority.

If nothing else, certainly the regional meetings should be a chance to meet-up, chat and network, which, in itself, may even lead to more business.

Perhaps more importantly, it is also the ideal for us to tell us what exactly you want from the CFA and where we could improve, what issues are affecting you on a day-to-day basis and what pending legal, technical or environmental issues you are facing.

It is also the opportunity to raise general questions such as do you want meetings and, if so, when – morning, afternoon or evening? What topics do you want discussing? And then there's the social activities that could be organised such as go-karting, race days – what sort of activities do you want?

The CFA is much more than this though, offering so many services

all of which cost money and have value. You pay for these through your membership and you can bet there are some members rightly making full use of these services, which you're subsidising. That surely does not make sense?

Perhaps the first place to start is to ask yourself, what you want to get out of the Association. You may conclude that all you want is the logo and associated support services (Health and Safety, risk assessment, problem resolving etc.) and, assuming that you undertake work to the standards that are expected of a CFA member, then this may be all you need.

However, the CFA can only move forward through the feedback and participation of its members both old AND young. I do intend to tackle this perception issue whilst I sit as president. The flooring industry is moving forward and so must we, but it can only be progressed with everybody's help.

I suppose the bottom line is that if you choose not to get involved then you give up the right to moan and form opinions that describe the CFA and you just may be the reason it is the way it is.

(See report on page 40)



John Alcock being congratulated on his election by the outgoing president Terry Wolfe at the CFA AGM

CFA comment



The chief executive of CFA: Richard Catt

CFA moves forward with new members and new benefits

A COUPLE of milestones have passed recently. A personal one for me is that I have completed six months in my role. In many ways, I can't believe it is six months, in other senses, due to the welcome and support I have received from all, it feels like I have been in post for much longer. Thank you.

The other milestone is a CFA one. For the first time we reached 400 contractor members. A warm welcome to all those companies who have joined us. The most recent ones are, of course, listed within CFJ.

I also attended the CFJ / CFA flooring industry awards and I

would like to give my thanks to Alan and the CFJ team for their hard work.

Congratulations also to all the winners but particularly to CFA member, Commercial Carpet Solutions of Buckinghamshire, winner of installation of the of the year category.

Their entry stood out to us because of the quality of work, the fact that they worked with the client to fulfil the brief (overcoming among other things a paint spillage) and the quality of their entry. All defined a company who clearly care. Well done again.

Constantly reviewing what you do and why you do it is really

important. With the help of all the team in the CFA office, we recently revamped our 'Why join the CFA' leaflet.

The exercise was good for us all as we considered a growing list of benefits and ways we could communicate the message. The CFA brand is a strong one and obviously featured in our thought process as something that would potentially attract a customer to use a CFA member.

But as we say in the new leaflet 'full membership offers you much more than that'. A copy of our leaflet is posted on the website, allowing you to download it and forward it on to anyone you feel

may be interested, but it also may prove a good reference point for you to use to make sure you enjoy the benefit of all the services that we offer.

We like to talk to members in as many ways as possible, but I consider the process as definitely a push pull relationship. The CFA website is a key element and one that we intend to continue to improve and develop.

Don't forget the member's area of the website, which offers help, guidance and other information of interest. As we continue to grow, I look forward to bringing you further details of new and improved benefits.



Terry Wolfe on the Construction Products Association

CPA is a valuable forum for the CFA

I RECENTLY attended a meeting of presidents and chairmen of member organisations of the Construction Products Association (CPA). The Contract Flooring Association is a member of the CPA. The meeting was on April 21 when I was still CFA President.

Baroness Shriti Vadera, the construction minister, addressed the meeting which was held at the Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR).

Baroness Vadera, who was appointed to her ministerial job by Gordon Brown in January this year, worked in investment banking for many years and is a former treasurer of Oxfam.

Her grasp of business matters is, therefore, thorough and she fielded questions from CPA members with the skill of a veteran politician.

What was particularly interesting to me at this meeting, was not actually the minister's replies to the questions, but matters brought out by the various association presidents and chairmen themselves.

There were three main topics:

1 Fuel costs: (this meeting preceded the recent strike at Grangemouth which seems to have had far-reaching effects). A brick manufacturer explained that gas, used for heating in the manufacture of bricks, had trebled in cost in the last 12 months. The cause was, apparently, a hike in international gas prices. In his opinion, the government ought to be doing more to contain these prices.

In the 1970s and 80s, my company imported genuine parquet battens and panels from Belgium. We might place an order to the value of 60,000 Belgian Francs (equivalent to £10,000). But due to a fluctuation in the rate of Belgian Francs to the pounds, when we came to pay, the goods cost £10,500.

Who got the extra £500? Not my suppliers in Belgium. They just received the 60,000 francs they quoted. No, the difference went into the pockets of currency dealers (a good argument today for the adoption of the Euro in the UK!).

So who is getting these extortionate gas prices? Partly the

government in tax, but also the massive oil and gas companies. I read that Shell and BP together made an extra £7bn due to the Grangemouth crisis!

It was felt that the government needs to rethink its energy and fuel taxes. It can no longer claim to be influencing behaviour in terms of energy and fuel efficiency, given that the current price level is more than sufficient to encourage companies to be as efficient as possible.

2 Regulations: There is a major problem for a manufacturer who makes an exclusive product, i.e. there is no other comparable product.

Local authorities, hospital trusts etc are forced by regulations to obtain quotations from two suppliers. But if there is no comparable product, they often end up buying an inferior material. This seems a completely pointless regulation, which needs to be tempered by common sense.

Regulations regarding the handling of waste can add considerable costs to a contract without any environmental benefit

and sometimes even with adverse environmental consequences.

3 Sustainability: It was felt by many presidents present that the dissemination of information on this subject was left to the various trade associations. Whilst this is probably a good thing, the government do have a responsibility to ensure the information reaches those organisations.

The minister was pressed to ensure the government sets long term realistic targets (and sticks to them) which will encourage industry to invest in the products and solutions to achieve these. Short term policies and targets that are constantly being changed do not encourage long term business decisions by industry.

The minister listened to all CPA speakers, and offered several helpful responses. For example, she promised to arrange a meeting between CPA members and the energy secretary to discuss the fuel cost situation.

I felt it was a very worthwhile meeting and demonstrated a considerable solidarity in the construction industry.