

Help and advice



Sid Bourne on another encounter with 'Bob the Builder'

Knock down price for a knocked up job

I WAS recently asked to look at a complaint by the **BWFA** (British Wood Flooring Association). A consumer had requested help in resolving a major problem where solid wood flooring had cupped and lifted.

The job in question was near to where I live, and I was passing that way a couple of days later. I contacted the consumer in question to arrange a site visit.

I made it clear that because I was passing I would have a quick look and advise accordingly. But if the consumer wanted a complete report the BWFA could organise it, but there would be a cost.

The day of the visit came I duly attended. The solid wood flooring was a European prefinished 140mm wide oak of rustic grade quality and the usual lots of short lengths; I think we know where it comes from.

The first thing I saw was that half the lounge floor had lifted and had to be taken up. The rest was just a mess with cupping all over the place, no expansion. This was over an area of 75sq m with no breaks.

The consumer was rightly concerned, having been told by someone that this was normal for solid wood flooring. This 'someone' just happened to be one of those 'experts' from the Yellow Pages.

I talked to this 'expert' who had already been out to view the floor at a cost of £75 cash. I asked what he meant by 'normal for a solid wood flooring to lift and cup like this'?

He said it happens all the time; it regularly happens to him, so it must be normal. End of conversation!

On further discussion with the consumer I discovered that they had purchased the flooring and were quoted for the installation. Bob the builder was already working in the consumer's house and told them that installing the flooring would be 'a piece of cake'.

As a special favour he said he would do the job for 'half the price', but they would need to pay cash! No surprise there.

That was the consumer's big mistake. Bob the builder's big mistakes are illustrated in my photographs on this page.



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My advice was that all of the damaged floor would need to be replaced and the subfloor returned to its bare bones. A recognised wood flooring installer would then have to be employed to make good the subfloor and install the flooring.

The consumer asked me whether an experienced wood floor installer would do 'a very good price'.

I replied that such an installer would make a charge for doing the job correctly. The consumer's immediately asked: 'Does that mean he will cost more than Bob the builder?'

'Yes,' I answered, 'but surely you don't want a mess like this a second time.'

'Well,' said the consumer, 'I still want the best price! Can you put me in contact with other installers who will give me the best price?'

'I can certainly put you in contact with a number of installers, but they will all charge about the same, depending on the distance they travel.'

'Oh dear,' replied the consumer, 'What should I do?'

So I responded: 'If you are trying to get a knock-down price, why then did you contact a

professional body like the BWFA who only promote quality and correct rates of pay for real experts?'

There was no answer.

The above is typical of conversations I have with consumers these days. They want to go for the cheapest possible quote, and then moan afterwards when it all goes wrong. And they still want it done for nothing.

The consumer I have just mentioned did ask a very pertinent question: 'What qualifications do these experts have?'

For once I was left speechless. I could not give an answer. But, of course, there is an NVQ qualification for the installation of timber flooring. Details can be found on the BWFA website www.bwfa.co.uk

Certificates are great because they show that you want to learn and improve your abilities. But ask any consumer about an NVQ and, most likely, they will not know what you are talking about.

The sad part, however, is that most installers of all types of flooring think they do not require an NVQ. After all, they have been

making a living without an NVQ in the past. But times are changing, thank goodness.

The story above ended well, because the consumer was convinced of the need to pay for a real expert, and Bob the builder agreed to pay back all the money, plus extra to resolve the additional labour cost.

Bob didn't do this willingly, however, but only after he realised that he had no choice. The alternative was to go to court and almost certainly lose.

But Bob did redeem himself in the end. He promised me that he will never again attempt to install wood flooring, because 'it is a pain in the behind.'

To anyone wanting information on NVQ qualifications, please contact the **BWFA**.

■ www.bwfa.co.uk

Or contact me directly on the number below and I will gladly give you guidance and help arrange training, etc. **CFJ Sid Bourne is technical director at Grundorf Terhurne and has over 25 years of installation experience.**

Further information on
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