

Editor's comment

GREEN CALLS MAKE SOME SEE RED

SITTING in their ivory towers, apparently oblivious to the realities of business, some flooring magazine editors have been preaching to readers about 'green' issues. What they seem to overlook is that small firms predominate in our contracting sector and that many of those have been traumatised by a terrible overnight slump in orders and enquiries.

Richard Catt on page 20 remarks that the CFA recorded a 90% membership renewal. That's an amazing achievement, especially when you consider that virtually all who didn't renew have ceased trading. CFA members are generally more successful, so while nearly 10% of CFA members have sadly gone under, the total number of flooring contractors lost this year could be as high as 15% or even 20%. That's tragic!

The real state of business is revealed in a letter on page 8 from Michael Ryan of Variety of Floors, one of the industry's most successful companies, who says that many contractors cannot afford to train their workers. That's equally tragic.

Yet some editors trumpet the word 'sustainability' in bigger and bigger headlines every month. They would appear to feel beholden to the manufacturers (which coincidentally include some of their advertisers) for whom 'sustainability' in every conceivable aspect has become like a badge of honour.

Indeed, the **S** word crops up in every second press release I receive, as manufacturers boast of their 'unrivalled' green credentials. Give them a pat on the back (and the wallet)!

All this may generate a frenzy of excitement in PR offices, but for some **CFJ** readers it arouses only a yawn. Don't get me wrong, these environmental advances are admirable, but

they simply don't warrant copious column inches of space in magazines which supposedly serve specialist contractors – people who are desperately seeking advice on everyday business matters, like getting builders to pay them on time.

Flooring contractors primarily need to know how particular products will perform in given locations. The many materials now claimed to be environmentally-friendly are seen by some fitters as either confusing, irrelevant or simply an irritation.

Manufacturers are, of course, directing their appeal largely towards specifiers who, in turn, are responsible to their clients who do require assurances on sustainability.

But flooring contractors operate in the real world. When it comes to buying products, the first question they ask is the price. That has long been so, but it is especially true in this dreadful recession where cut-throat margins are driving many into insolvency. Many also believe, rightly or wrongly, that products described as 'sustainable' carry a price premium (i.e. are more expensive).

Like it or not, we editors have to accept that while so many flooring contractors are fighting to save their businesses, they're much less focussed on saving the planet!



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For starters:

Rubbish celebrities!

The British Cleaning Council (BCC) is looking for personalities to front its Keep Britain Tidy campaign. Attributes include 'a hatred of litter, a passion for cleaner, greener places and a willingness to give up two days a year for free'.

We can all think of rubbish celebrities, but

the question is which one will actually do something without being paid?

BCC has similar initials to the broadcaster, so on my first glance at the release, I read:

'BBC seeks rubbish celebrities!'

I thought, well at last they're admitting it!



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