

IT HURTS LESS WHEN YOU LAUGH!

THOSE who are slightly longer in the tooth may recall the popular 1970s ITV sitcom set in a hospital ward entitled *It hurts 'only when I laugh!'* The 2008 version – with so many people suffering as a result of the weak economy – could be: *'It hurts less when I laugh!'*

Now I'm not suggesting that there is anything amusing about a recession. But let's face it, there is far too much doom and gloom around these days, especially in the media which all too frequently splashes bad news stories.

It's true that **CFJ** can sometimes also be accused of this if you take our couple of market surveys starting on page 40. They certainly make grim reading. But we always highlight any 'good news' and offer bags of helpful advice, such as the tips on improving your credit control to boost your cashflow, written exclusively for **CFJ** by a leading lawyer (page 34).

And getting back to the theme of laughter, astute readers may have also noticed an occasional touch of humour and even a mildly irreverent approach in this magazine. In which other flooring publication, other than **CFJ**, would you see a headline such as: **'Smelly carpets not to be sniffed at!'**? (August 2008). Remember too that behind certain comedy is a very serious message.

For example, the readers' forum on page 10 features a comment by Colin Watson of the BCFA, explaining all the problems he faced getting his toilet unblocked. That article is headlined: **'Talking sewage, bog standard service!'**

Although Colin emphasises the funny side – giving me, at

least, a chuckle – he illustrates a major reason why some flooring firms today are struggling, while others are doing so much better: Dreadful customer service.

It's plainly self-evident that no business can exist without customers. You may get people to your door just by slashing prices. But only well-orchestrated professional customer service will bring them back and generate the all-important word of mouth recommendations. Nowadays companies tend to be less loyal to their long-time suppliers; but what they're actually looking for is value, rather than silly prices.

Everyone knows a particular sales rep who has excellent rapport with clients, keen to share a laugh and able to make them feel that they are personal friends, or an admin office person who always appears to be courteous, pleasant and helpful, ready to go 'that extra mile', who customers ask for by name. Employees like those should be treasured by their managers. They are worth an absolute fortune.

One of the best definitions of good customer service that I've heard is to make your customers feel happy and to send them away with a smile. And that's no joke!



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Contract Flooring Journal (CFJ) is published monthly by



www.contractflooringjournal.co.uk

**Address for advertising, production, circulation & subscriptions:
The Oast, Great Danegate, Eridge, East Sussex TN3 9HU**

EDITORIAL ADDRESS ONLY:

102 Queens Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9JU

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Origination and printing by Ghyllprint, Heathfield, Sussex. Suppliers have paid for promotional photographs.

Editorial and advertising copy in this issue have been carefully checked and Kick-Start Publishing cannot accept any responsibility for any errors.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

UK £45 Europe £80
Rest of the world £160
Single copy £5



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Official journal of the Contract Flooring Association

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**Please note: All editorial copy must be sent to the publisher at:
102 Queens Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9JU**