



How good are shopfitters at training?

A silly question surely? Training is part of the psyche of the shopfitter. It is what stands him apart from the construction industry. It is what makes him so much better at what he does. That's right isn't it?

Well – yes and no. Certainly the shopfitter continues to set great store by the skills and expertise of those he employs. But how much time he is prepared to spend and how much cash is he prepared to outlay on ensuring that training is provided.

The days when firms spent four or five years training young people for a lifetime, if not with the same company, at least in the industry, are long gone. Sons no longer follow in their father's footsteps and the general education system no longer fosters enthusiasm for the traditional trades. "You can't get decent apprentices any more" is the cry. Some companies have stopped trying and are prepared to take their chance with the resources they have or buy-in labour as the occasion arises.

Yet the skills are still there – the NAS annual Apprentice's Design Competition shows that. But is the intake of 100 shopfitting apprentices a year (that is what the statistics show) sufficient or are more needed to maintain a skilled craft force? We know in our hearts that more training is needed but how do you make a silk purse out of a pig's ear?

Obviously throwing money at the problem is not the solution. A large

proportion of the industry pays an annual levy to the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) but most companies either don't carry out training or can't be bothered with the paperwork necessary to claim back training grants. The CITB levy/grant system is seen to be effective for the general construction industry but of less value to shopfitting. Nevertheless there is still that feeling that it is not in the shopfitter's nature to ignore training and that there must be something going on.

Perhaps shopfitters are avoiding the formal training systems but are quietly carrying out their own training programmes regardless of formal agreements and training grants. Perhaps the real shopfitting training effort is clouded by training done on woodmachining, non-ferrous metals and plain joinery. Training done, in-company, on setting out and contracts management also has to be taken into account.

NAS intends to find out what the industry wants by the way of training. Past surveys have been based on what shopfitters are doing rather than on what they would like to do. A new survey will ask not 'how many apprentices do you have?' but 'how many apprentices would you like?' The Association also wants to ensure that members are aware of the training assistance that is available to them. Hopefully the results of the Association's enquiries will help to ensure that shopfitters remain top of the skills class!

Dates for the Diary

Note is given of the following Association meetings due to take place in the coming months:

24th July
NAS Charity Golf Day –
Whitefields Hotel
Golf and Country Club,
Thurlaston,
Warwickshire.

19th September
Northern Region
Autumn Weekend –
at Cragwood,
Windermere.

8th October
–National Autumn
General Meeting –
northern venue to
be notified.

29th October
Meeting of the
London and
Southern Region.



Design Partnership Award

The new concept design developed for De Beers LV in Old Bond Street, London, by Antonio Cittero & Partners and put in place by London based Architects, Mark Pinney Associates, has won the NAS Design Partnership Award for 2003.

Ken Mackay of MAK Architects, who chaired the Judging Panel, presented the Award to Mark Pinney of Mark Pinney Associates on 15th May at a gathering of over 100 designers, shopfitters and clients at Trinity House in London. Goodman Hichens PLC, who were the shopfitters on the winning project, also received an Award.

Commended Awards also went to Adjaye Associates for their design of Selfridges, Manchester, where the shopfitting was carried out by Mivan Limited, and 20/20 for

their design of Liberty, London, on which the shopfitters were A E Hadley Ltd.

Wilf Hobson, President of the National Association of Shopfitters, introducing the Awards said that strong partnership between designers and shopfitters was evident in each of the 28 projects entered in the Award. In several instances, the partnerships had been extended to include other designers and contractors as part of the project. He was sure that the Award would increase awareness of the innovative design and quality of work that designers and shopfitters were capable of achieving. The scope of the entries had covered not just retail but commercial premises, restaurants, hotels and museums, as well as TV studios, and covered projects from towns and cities throughout the UK.



Gordon Elliott, NAS Director (right), catches up with Geoffrey Chalk of Datum International



The team from Goodman Hichens join with Mark Pinney and Jane McKay of Mark Pinney Associates to receive their awards



NAS President, Wilf Hobson, helps Tony Hichens of Goodman Hichens celebrate his success



Ken Mackay (right), Chairman of the Judging Panel, compares notes with former Chairman, Martyn Bullock, and Karen Willey of Red Jacket

Ideal Move

Ideal Shopfitters have celebrated their move to new £2.2 million premises with an opening ceremony carried out by the National President, Mr Wilf Hobson.

Located at the former Eddie Stobart yard on the outskirts of Stamford, Ideal Shopfitters' new premises are clearly visible from the A1. Incorporating 12,000 sq ft of offices, CAD centre, conference rooms, training facilities and staff gymnasium, the development compliments the existing 10,000 sq ft joinery and manufacturing workshop.

The organisation has come a long way since its founding in 1989 when Proprietor, Darren Laughton, set up his business fitting kitchens and bathrooms. At that time the business operated from a small premises with a single van – a stark contrast to the business today which employs in excess of 100 employees and deploys a fleet of 23 vehicles. Operating on a national scale, Ideal Shopfitters have forged ongoing relationships with some of the UK's leading companies.

Triggered by the organisation's excellent growth, the move signifies Ideal Shopfitters' confidence in the shop-fitting industry and its commitment as a local employer.

In fact, with a growth rate in employees of some 20% per annum, the firm is fast becoming one of the largest UK owned employers in the Stamford area.

"We are extremely proud of our new premises," comments Darren Laughton, "The move is the culmination of a lot of hard work and commitment from everyone involved. The building is a showcase of our work and we will be welcoming clients new and existing to view our new surroundings. I anticipate the building being a springboard for our future success, standing as testimony to the quality of our workmanship and clarity of our vision."

"I was delighted when the National President agreed to officially open our new premises – I felt it was recognition from a highly respected body in the industry of our achievements so far."

As if an investment of this size was not enough, Ideal Shopfitters are already part way through the construction of a new 5,000 sq ft warehouse at the rear of the site. Clearly more good news, not only for the local economy and employment figures, but for the industry as a whole.

*NAS President, Wilf Hobson,
assisted by Darren Laughton, proprietor of Ideal Shopfitters,
opening Ideal's new offices.*



Job Advertising

Such is employment law today that people in Britain have at least five rights which they could pursue to the Employment Tribunal before they are an employee, before even they have been interviewed! Those five are to be joined by others in the not too distant future. The existing five are concerned with discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, trade union and (Northern Ireland only at present), religion/political opinion or persuasion. Therefore adverts should not contain any element which is directly or indirectly discriminatory.

But why are you advertising? Recruitment advertising is usually for one of two purposes: to replace leavers or to increase numbers (presumably to cope with growth/increased production). It should only be done at the end of the thought process chain, not that leavers are automatically replaced like with like. Questions need to be asked starting with, perhaps, why are they leaving and could something be done to persuade them to stay?

If they do leave – do you need to replace? Could the work be split amongst a number of other employees thus saving the costs of employing someone? If some hours still need to be replaced (even all of them) is the replacement of a full timer with a full timer the best thing to do? Would two 20 hour, or four 10 hour workers, be more flexible and economic (especially if you can keep them below the income tax, NI, employer's contribution threshold). Does this leaver offer the opportunity of re-structure, re-engineer working methods and system without problems of staff resistance?

Then check the job description to ensure it is up to date. Use the job description/requirements to define the attributes required of the person carrying it out (called a personnel specification). For example, strict eyesight colour definition requirements required of airline pilots means that someone who is colour blind (especially red/green) simply cannot do the job. Do not introduce requirements which would indirectly

discriminate by requiring a standard from an applicant that the job does not demand. A high standard of spoken and written English is not necessary for someone whose job is general labouring. Less obvious would be, as happened in a ladies wear chain store, where a man was refused employment because the job required certain intimate measurements of ladies. The Tribunal decided that, as the measuring element was such a small percentage of the total time and there were female assistants who could carry out those duties, the Respondent was not justified in discriminating. Be very careful about what the job really requires.

Once you know what the job is and what it requires of the individual, the advert can then be drawn up. Job title should be the prominent heading. Adverts with the salary displayed attract a larger and more relevant response. Highlight skill requirements or else too many unqualified personnel will chance their arm, and benefits, not just financial but growth or promotion opportunities, growing market sector/market leader, etc. Consider where and when to advertise and target carefully. Obviously avoid using any potentially discriminatory language, eg 'Man Friday' wanted, as this clearly discriminates against females and may even be racist as well. "Waiter" is not acceptable, Waiter/Waitress is. Statements such as Cashier and Officer are neutral, even Manager is acceptable, it is not necessary to state Manager/Manageress – but should there be any doubt, make this clear. Make clear how applications should be submitted, eg application form, letter, letter and CV, fax, e-mail, etc., and by what closing date.

Time taken to decide what precisely the job is and what is required of the individual(s) is rarely time wasted. "Staff wanted", as an advert, usually is!

(This article has been provided by Peninsula Business Services. For Further information call 0161 834 2774 quoting REF: 8630.)

4th Motor Insurance Directive – Commercial Motor

Insurers have written to all Commercial Vehicle owners insured with them stating that the **4th EU Motor Insurance Directive** has come into force and that there is the development of a Motor Insurance Database (MID).

The Legislation is now in force and became operative from the 19th January 2003 and companies are now required by Law to ensure that details of their vehicles are immediately recorded on the Motor Insurance Database. This means that companies are obliged to advise Insurers of any alterations within their Motor Fleet and are also required to keep records for seven years of any temporary additional vehicles (those held for less than 15 days) which are not submitted to the Motor Insurance Database. Insurers have come up with various methods of seeking this information from their Insured including Internet solutions.

The Legislation makes it particularly important that companies provide the data to Insurers in a timely manner.

The Policy condition already stipulates that any vehicle changes must be notified to Insurers immediately and this will enable the Insurer to keep the records up to date with the Motor Insurance Database. Please note that the Legislation includes potential fines of up to £5,000 in the event of failure to provide this information.

Members are strongly advised to ensure that all vehicle alterations are advised to their Insurer or Insurance Broker within five days so that the Insurer can comply with the instruction to provide the information to the Motor Insurance Database within 14 days.

Should any further information be required, please do not hesitate to contact Darwin Clayton (UK) Limited, Darwin House, 20 Mount Ephraim Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1ED.

Tel: 01892 511144. Fax: 01892 511455.

Email: info@dcuk.co.uk.

www.darwinclayton.co.uk

More skills success for Tekne

Although not having the experience of all the other competitors, **Matthew Allen**, a second year apprentice with **Tekne Shopfitting** of Poole, achieved third place in the Annual Craft Competition run by the Worshipful Company of Joiners and Ceilers. Matthew confounded the Worshipful Company's fears that he might struggle in the competition and his experience will stand him in good stead for future competitions.

Tendering a waste of time

Around 100 people representing clients, designers and shopfitters attended the NAS Debate at the Geological Society in London's Piccadilly on 2nd April.

The subject for the debate was "This house believes that tendering is a waste of time and resources" and charged with proposing the motion were Ken Corsie of design company Corsie Naysmith and Amanda Boyle of Caledonia Contracts. Against them and with the more onerous task were Jason Pior of retailer Starbucks and Clive Johnson of project management company Abacus.

Prior to the debate 52 delegates voted for the motion and, although Jason Pior and Clive Johnson had some success with their argument that tendering was a useful introduction to partnerships, the motion still won overwhelming support at the end of the evening.

An interesting aspect of the debate was the emphasis placed on encouraging partnerships between designers and shopfitters, although there was still a feeling that, too often, no matter how good the partnership, the shopfitter was left with more than the fair share of responsibility for completing on time.

Win a cool day out

Thanks to MITIE Air Conditioning.



As a professional in the design or fit out of retail environments, you are relied upon by your customers to help them create the right atmosphere. This means offering them an air conditioning capability as standard. MITIE Air Conditioning is a specialist in the design, installation and maintenance of comfort cooling systems for all types of retail environments.

If you're currently working with an air conditioning specialist, but are considering changing your outfit, give MITIE a call today. Be in complete control of your climate. Call **01827 67000**



Can you spot the five differences? The winner can choose from one of the following cool activities:

- Golf School
- 4x4 Off-Road Adventure
- Gliding
- America's Cup Yacht Sailing
- Theatre Tickets
- Cowboy Experience

Email your answers to nas@clara.net or fax your answers to **01883 624 961**

Spring Weekend Success

A swirl from a Scottish piper at the entrance to Pollok House on the outskirts of Glasgow, brought to an end a highly enjoyable three days in Scotland for 50 members and guests attending the Spring Meeting and Weekend at the end of April.

Based at the excellent Malmaison Hotel in Glasgow, the Stirling Stone Group hosted the Spring Meeting at the Stirling offices and were able to give members an insight into the research work that their laboratory company undertook on the make up of various different stones. Stirling Stone also arranged for members to see the

restoration work the company had undertaken at Stirling Castle.

The meeting itself featured an excellent presentation on the CDM Regulations by Brian Law, Chief Executive of the Association of Planning Supervisors. Mr Law expressed a good deal of sympathy with the problems encountered by shopfitters and he indicated a willingness to discuss how his Association might co-operate with the NAS in addressing problems on CDM that arose with clients and designers. In consequence, the NAS is seeking to develop a joint approach to the Health and Safety Executive.

July 2003

Forthcoming exhibitions

Members might wish to note that the following exhibitions are due to be held in the UK and Europe during July, August and September of this year. Further details are available on request from NAS House.

UNITED KINGDOM

Modular Display Systems Exhibition – DISPLAY

London

2–3 July 2003

Building & Construction Show – BELFAST EXPO

Belfast

2–7 July 2003

Manchester Furniture Show

Manchester

13–16 July 2003

Furniture Trade Show – BFM

London

3–6 August 2003

Energy Conference & Exhibition – ENERGY 2003

Birmingham

3–4 September 2003

London Building & Construction Show

London

16–17 September 2003

Premier Interior Design Trade –

DECOREX INTERNATIONAL

London

21–24 September 2003

EUROPE

Interior Decoration Trade Fair – DECOFORCE

Brussels

31 August – 4 September 2003

8th Kazakhstan International Interiors, Furnishing, Flooring, Finishes and Textiles Exhibition – KAZBUILD 2003

Kazakhstan

3–6 September 2003

International Construction Trade Fair – MATEXPO

Kortrijk, Belgium

3–7 September 2003

Shopfitting Equipment & Services Trade Show – PROPSHOP

Bucharest

3–7 September 2003

Visual Advertising & Signmaking – VISCOM

Dusseldorf

4–6 September 2003

International Furniture Interior Equipment & Design – INTERIER 2003

Brno, Czech Republic

4–7 September 2003

Environmental Trade Exhibition – ECOLOGY 2003

Gothenburg

8–10 September 2003

International Architecture & Construction Exhibition – STROYINDUSTRIYA

Moscow

8–12 September 2003

Tools & Industrial Environment Trade Fair – HI INDUSTRY

Herning, Denmark

9–12 September 2003

Forthcoming exhibitions *continued*

International Building & Construction Trade Show – BATIMAT

St Petersburg

10–13 September 2003

International Furniture Wood Processing & Interior Décor Fair – BIFE-TIMB

Bucharest

10–14 September 2003

Woodworking Machinery & Furniture Production Trade – WOODWORKING IRELAND

Dublin

11–13 September 2003

Building Exhibition

Dublin

18–20 September 2003

International Furniture Furnishing & Interior Design Exhibition – ABITARE IL TEMP

Verona

18–22 September 2003

Building Energy & Environmental Fair – BAU & ENERGIE

Wieselburg, Austria

19–21 September 2003

Machine Tools & Mechanical Engineering Exhibition

St Petersburg

22–24 September 2003

Paints Varnishes Inks & Adhesives – EUROCOAT

Limoges

23–25 September 2003

International Building Fair – FOR ARCH

Prague

23–27 September 2003

Furniture & Interior Decoration Fair – HABITARE 2003

Helsinki

23–28 September 2003

Building Exhibition – BYGG REIS DEG

Lillestrom, Norway

23–28 September 2003

Building & Interiors Exhibition – BAKU BUILD

Baku, Azerbaijan

24–26 September 2003

International Subcontracting Exhibition – SUBCONTRATACION

Bilbao

24–27 September 2003

International Furniture Exhibition – PIFE

Warsaw

25–27 September 2003

Interior Design Trade Fair – RAUMAUSSTATTUNG

Dortmund

26–28 September 2003

Furniture & Interior Decoration Exhibition

Toulouse

26–30 September 2003

International Furniture & Interior Design Exhibition – BAKUMEBEL

Baku, Azerbaijan

29 September 2003

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