

InsideOut



The Builders' Conference
Trade Association

10 October 2010

WELCOME TO THE SIXTH EDITION OF INSIDEOUT, THE
ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER OF THE BUILDERS' CONFERENCE



The Builders' Conference Practise What It Preaches

The Builders' Conference has practised what it preaches by becoming the first trade association to begin gathering its member information using the Builder's Profile alternative to pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQ) that it has been backing for the past four years.

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Market intelligence provider and construction data specialist The Builders' Conference, has put its money where its mouth is by becoming the first trade association to collect its member information using the Builder's Profile PQQ alternative.



**IT'S BIG
AND IT'S CLEVER**
www.buildersprofile.co.uk

The association has been helping to develop the scheme to replace the hated PQQ system for the past four years, but with recent enhancements has now started to use the system itself.

"The Builder's Profile was developed to reduce the administrative burden of PQQs on our industry by providing a single, centralised online database," says The Builders' Conference Chief Executive, Neil Edwards. "But it has now been developed to allow organisations including trade associations to collect information. Subsequently, The Builders' Conference will begin using the Builder's Profile questionnaire to gather and maintain membership details with immediate effect."

SAVING TIME & MONEY

Edwards says that the decision to switch is part of The Builders' Conference's ongoing commitment to increasing efficiency in the UK construction industry. "By using the Builder's profile, our members

**PETITION
AGAINST
PQQ'S**

www.nomorepqq.co.uk

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will be able to submit their membership details to us far more efficiently," he says. "If the company in question is not yet a Builder's Profile member, they just need to complete a simple registration that doesn't involve lengthy, time-consuming forms, and grant us access to that information. If they are already a Builder's Profile Premium member, they only have to confirm that their details are up to date and re-submit."

The Builder's Profile was originally developed to help alleviate the administrative headache caused by the pre-qualification questionnaire that it is estimated costs the UK construction industry more than £250 million in wasted man hours each year.

The Builder's Profile is clearly pleased with this adoption of their centralised database by The Builders' Conference. "We are delighted that The Builders' Conference is again leading the way - proving that trade associations do not need to add

further paper-work burdens to their membership," says Builder's Profile Operations Director, Paul Long. "The Builder's Profile service was designed from the belief that main contractors & subcontractors should only need to answer common questions once, no matter how many organisations need the answers to those questions"

"As an organisation, we are committed to increasing efficiencies within the industry that we serve," Neil Edwards concludes. "In the past, our membership registration process required the completion of a form which, although brief, was just another piece of paperwork to be processed by an industry that is weighed down with red tape and bureaucracy. By becoming the first trade association to accept membership details via the Builder's Profile, we have eliminated another administrative burden and demonstrated our commitment to the Builder's Profile."

Your Builders' Conference Needs YOU!

The Builders' Conference is actively seeking some new blood to sit on the association's council and help steer it through the coming months and years.

In addition to having a direct input on how the trade association runs, council membership affords you a greater voice in the UK building and construction industry at large.

The position is not particularly onerous - there is a maximum of three council meetings each year - but it is an ideal job for anyone looking to widen their industry knowledge or to give something back to the sector from which they derive their income.

So whether you're a lifelong industry veteran with experience to spare, or a younger industry professional with ideas to share, please contact The Builders' Conference Chief Executive Neil Edwards for further details.



Curing the Sick Man of UK Industry

The construction industry, the UK's largest employer, has long been perceived as a health and safety wasteland. But all of that is changing, according to Neil Edwards, chief executive of trade association The Builders' Conference.



The public perception of the construction industry – tough men, stripped to the waist in all weathers with jeans slung, perhaps, a little too low – has for years belied an ugly truth that lay at the heart of UK's largest employer: those rough, tough men were sick.



Often exposed to life-threatening hazards on a daily basis, on-site injuries were seen as a rite of passage; men (and women) were exposed to a variety of unseen hazards ranging from asbestos to a variety of other potentially harmful chemicals; the nomadic nature of the business meant that very few workers had ready access to the services of a general practitioner; excessive drinking and smoking were considered an integral part of the after work bonding ritual; and the majority of construction canteens specialised in a single, unifying ingredient – cholesterol.

But the times they are a'changing. A series of ongoing Government and industry initiatives has helped to improve the traditionally poor health of its workforce whilst, at the same time, addressing more modern issues such as drink and drugs misuse. And while some of these initiatives would have been greeted with the derision of the industry's forebears who eschewed hard hats for flat caps, there is no question that they're proving effective, simultaneously increasing worker health and industry productivity.

LEADING FROM THE FRONT

In a sector that is built upon multiple layers of contractors, sub-contractors and specialist contractors, the construction industry has understandably adopted a top-down approach to improving the health of its workforce. For more than a decade, the upper echelons of the industry have been blazing the trail for improved worker welfare with an increasingly rigid regime of compulsory health and welfare checks for its own workers.

Having got its own house in order, these large national and multi-national concerns are now using their power and influence to insist that the sub and specialist contractors working on their sites follow their health and welfare lead.

Indeed worker health checks and, increasingly, drink and drug checks have become a common requirement in the industry's pre-tender qualification process. In short, if you don't look after your workers, you're not working for the UK's largest and most influential main contractors.

And the industry is not stopping there. An increasing number are throwing their weight behind Constructing Better Health (CBH), a not-for-profit scheme set up by the construction industry to improve the health of its workforce.

"During an initial pilot scheme, it was found that approximately one-third of workers had health issues that could affect their work," says CBH chief executive Michelle Aldous. "In an industry that lost over 1.8 million days between 2008 and 2009 as a result of work related illness, effective management of occupational health is crucial."

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HEALTH TOOLKIT

Through membership of CBH, members can access the Construction Health Action Toolkit (CHAT) that allows them to upload personnel information for all their direct employees. This software then compares the employee's job title with a health assessment matrix to determine an action plan for subsequent health checks.

Employees are issued with a CBH card and unique registration number, which employers may then use to access the individual's fitness-for-task outcome.

The database and card access scheme is designed to ensure the effective management of any work related health issues in line with any recommendations to protect the health of a worker. In addition, it allows workers to move from different sites without the added costs to the employer of repeating occupational health checks.

Using the CBH card, an employer can check that an employee is fit-for-task, but is not permitted access to their medical records. As part of the scheme, CBH also provides a list of accredited occupational health providers who can be contacted with the confidence that they have met the standards defined by CBH.

RANDOM TESTING

However, while the sector is making huge strides in addressing underlying health issues among its workforce, it is increasingly being required to focus its attention on issues of a more self-inflicted nature.

Six years ago, Screen Safe UK, an accredited drugs testing agency, was called in to test at random the employees at an international construction company. The results were alarming: 100 per cent

of workers failed the test. "Even we were surprised," recalls Matthew Taylor, Screen Safe's managing director. "But within six months, through promoting awareness of random testing and proper education, the figure was down to between 5 and 10 per cent."

Those initial results appeared to confirm what many in the industry had feared, historically at least: that misuse of drink and drugs was endemic and posed a serious challenge to responsible employers. All kinds of people are involved in drug misuse; they do not conform to any stereotype, making detection difficult. It is why random testing has become, for some companies at least, firmly embodied in their occupational health culture, providing a decisive deterrent to many habitual offenders. But not all.

Industry-wide, says Taylor, there remains a stubborn 20 per cent failure rate, and the pattern of drugs misuse is changing constantly. "People will always find new drugs; if one drug is banned, they will find other substances, such as 'legal highs' like mephedrone." Mephedrone was only recently given a category B classification under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

It is widely acknowledged that employees whose performance is impaired while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances are a potential danger to themselves and to others. Yet in addition to the obvious health and safety issues, ignorance of, or a passive approach to substance misuse can have devastating commercial implications for employers. Companies that fail to have in place a robust policy to detect and eradicate substance misuse or rely on an informal 'understanding' will miss out where blue chip clients, increasingly, demand a zero-tolerance approach.



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ZERO TOLERANCE

Zero-tolerance of drink and drugs misuse is fast becoming the norm in the UK construction and allied industries. In the rail industry, the zero tolerance rule is underscored in Personal Track Safety (PTS) training, and random testing for alcohol and controlled drugs is commonplace. More and more names are following their lead and widening the net to include trade contractors in the big crackdown on drugs.

For alcohol, the pass limit is much lower than, say, that stipulated in existing drink-drive legislation. For driving the limit is 80 mg alcohol per 100 ml of blood. The limit for rail industry workers is 29 mg.

Building Health's managing director is Nichola Elvy who, as an occupational health nurse, formed the company in 2004. She says controlled drugs are more of a problem than alcohol in terms of the scale of misuse. "We know from our regular screening of employees that some drink a lot more than they should, sometimes 80 units a week [contemporary wisdom advises a maximum for males of 21 units, and 14 for women] but because of the already strict drink-drive laws, and because most people have to drive to work, we find mostly that employees arrive sober. Other substances, particularly drugs such as cannabis and cocaine, are much more of a problem."

Drug screening or testing is, of course, a sensitive issue because of the many employment implications involved. Securing the agreement of

the workforce to the principle of screening is essential, partly because of the practical and legal issues involved. More often than not, organisations in safety-sensitive industries are using random but continuous screening and testing as a way of controlling drug problems. Testing can be by taking samples of breath, urine, hair or saliva, the last three of these for analysis at an approved United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) laboratory.

Employers' legal position on drugs is outlined in a variety of Acts of Parliament. They have a general duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HSW Act) to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees.

They also have a duty under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, to assess the risks to the health and safety of their employees. Firms that knowingly allow an employee under the influence of drug misuse to continue working and his or her behaviour places the employee or others at risk, could face prosecution.

THORNY ISSUE

The principal legislation in the UK for controlling the misuse of drugs is the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Nearly all drugs with misuse and/or dependence liability are covered by it. There is further guidance from The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, which has published 'A practical guide to the key issues in managing employees who misuse drugs and alcohol.' It includes: developing a policy, recruitment – including health screening, providing support and taking disciplinary action, supporting the substance misuser, testing for drug and alcohol misuse at work, and the legal implications. There are appendices with sample policy statements, specific sources of help and advice, model drug and alcohol workplace policies, and risk assessments when employing ex-substance users.

Testing can be a thorny issue with the unions, however Barckley Sumner, a spokesman for UCATT, says the union accepts companies feel the need to introduce drink and drug testing. "However we believe that all new workers needed to be informed of the procedures before they start work.

All existing workers need to be properly informed of the new procedures, they also have to be given the opportunity to pass the new tests. For instance cannabis can remain in the body for three months, so a significant lead in time is required. Drink and drug testing should not be used as a form of intimidation, where certain people are repeatedly targeted, for example trade union activists."

Twice the Celebration

Here at Crest House, we have always felt sorry for anyone unfortunate enough to have a birthday that falls on Christmas Day. These poor souls generally receive a combined coverall gift together with a birthday card upon which the sender has scrawled “merry Xmas” as an afterthought.

construction news

However, on the rare occasions when birthdays and Christmas do collide, there is an excuse for a REALLY big party. And that's precisely what The Builders' Conference has planned for Wednesday 8 December 2010 when we not only hold our much-anticipated Christmas Luncheon (see page 7) but when we also gather to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the association.

By way of further celebration of this momentous anniversary, we're also joining forces with leading weekly industry magazine Construction News to produce a special one-off supplement that will look back at the past, analyses the present, and considers the future of The Builders' Conference.

And we would like you to be a part of this supplement that will be received by more than 20,000 industry professionals including all members of The Builders' Conference, all guests at the Christmas Luncheon, and the entire readership of Construction News.

We have secured an excellent advertising package deal, which I hope will encourage all members to lend their support.

All members will be contacted shortly by one of the Construction News advertising sales team and we would be extremely grateful if you could show them (and us) your full support in making this publication a celebratory triumph.

If you have any queries about this publication, please feel free to call me on Tel: 020 8770 0111.

Neil Edwards
Chief Executive



A Day at the Races

Attendees at the recent The Builders' Conference race day at Lingfield racecourse have called for a steward's enquiry following some “unusual betting activity” in which at least one member of the Crest House team is implicated.

Eyewitnesses say that The Builders' Conference's Lisa Smith was “surprisingly successful” in her horse selections which, she claimed, were based purely on the colour of the jockey's outfit. Other race-goers were alerted when Smith introduced the course's resident expert who then proceeded to offer tips on horses that were a combination of sick, lame and lazy.

Lisa Smith, meanwhile, was seen dashing to the bookies having ignored the guidance from the course pro, subsequently returning with a significant amount of cash. “It was blatant,” says one eyewitness. “While everyone else was counting their losses, Lisa would babble something about liking a jockey's red hat before popping off to the bookies. And whenever she came back, she was holding folding money.” To add insult to injury, Lisa was presented with a bouquet of flowers at the end of the race day for having organised the event in the first place....organised in more ways than one, some suggested!



The Builders' Conference Christmas Luncheon 2010



Act now to
avoid
disappointment

The Ballroom Dorchester Hotel Park Lane
London W1K 1QA

Wednesday 8th December 2010 12.15 pm for 1.00 pm lunch

The Builders' Conference would like to extend a warm welcome to all our members and their guests, to join us for a traditional Christmas luncheon at the Dorchester to celebrate our 75th anniversary

The relaxed and opulent atmosphere of one of the world's most famous hotels will guarantee this will be an event not to be missed

The Christmas event will feature a free pre-lunch bar and wine on the table.

The cost of a ticket is just £96.00 per person. Book a table of 10 and get one place free.

Our Guest speaker this year is
Alistair McGowan

For bookings call 020 8770 0111

