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The Plumbing Industry Association of South Australia Inc.



May / June 2012



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ASBUILT

National Harmonisation – How hard can it be?

Australia is a country made up of 6 states and 2 territories, so why is it so difficult to get a National Work Health and Safety system approved / agreed to by the 8 jurisdictions?

Well, the same question can be asked on National Licensing, with an article written in the Melbourne Age on the 2nd April indicating there are major problems with the proposed national licensing structure.

Then there is the proposed national legislation banning Electric Hot Water systems (SA got the jump on all the other jurisdictions) to comply with the National Energy Department initiative to rescue the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Today, only SA and to a lesser degree QLD, have now agreed to the enforcement.

Another national initiative that has fallen apart!

We look at sport, the AFL for example, there is always disharmony with some states getting a distinct advantage over others, whether it is in the draft, or the scheduling of games or who has the control.

I am not one to build mountains out of mole hills but what is going on?

It is therefore not surprising that the Work Health and Safety legislation in some states / territories is now law in some states but is being blocked or challenged in others.

So how does this impact you the humble plumber wanting to complete a day's work in the allocated hours? Well, you need to keep up to date with the circus act.

It won't be long before you will be involved in this circus whether you like it or not.

The PIA is actively meeting all the government departments that have some influence over the circus acts.

We are strongly advocating for consistency and high levels of compliance, as it is important that no changes are made that will either 'dumb' down the trade or allow less qualified tradespeople to enter the industry.

We will fight for your needs and fight for a level of compliance that will eliminate any dodgy plumbing operators out of the industry.

We can only do this with your support, so if there are requests for proof of non compliant work, we want all the evidence you can muster. Email or fax your evidence to the PIA.



Andrew Clarke
Executive Officer



Pipeline

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Maintenance Plumbing

Safety Issues Concerning the Installation and Servicing of Thermostatic mixing Valves

What skills do you require to install and maintain TMV's?

Is the plumber able to:

- Interpret and apply the various codes and standards in relation to thermostatic mixing valves?
- Identify and understand the necessary design requirements when designing an installation with thermostatic mixing valves?
- Carry out servicing and commissioning of thermostatic mixing valves?
- Complete the relevant documentation when servicing and commissioning thermostatic mixing valves?
- Describe the role of management accountability and responsibility and pass on a clear set of instructions and guidelines for the service and maintenance for thermostatic mixing valves under their control?

If you answered no to any of these, please contact the PIA to enroll in a TMV training course.

Industry Awareness

There must be a greater industry awareness about the issue of hot water scalding, and with the presence of Legionella Pneumophila Bacteria within hot water services.

The plumber requires broader knowledge of the Australian Standards AS 3500.4, AS 4032, and the "Guidelines for the control of legionella" which will ensure that the correct installation of TMV valves will reduce the risks of scalding and bacterial contamination within early childhood centre's, primary and secondary schools and nursing homes or similar facilities for young, aged, sick or people with disabilities.



Tempering valves

An adjustable tempering valve can be installed into the hot water supply line incorporating all household hot water outlets. This will provide tempered water to all hot water fixtures at a temperature that will guard against scalding (50°C). Manufacturers recommend these valves must be replaced every 5 years.

Thermostatic mixing valves

A higher cost option is a thermostatic mixing valve. These valves can supply temperatures selected between 15°C and 45°C. Clause 3.7 in AS 2500.4, highlights relevant information including

installation instructions, isolating assemblies, commissioning, and maintenance guidelines.

The valves can be installed with one application per bathroom, or a multi-point installation depending on the positioning of hot water outlets, and the configuration of existing pipework.

An Interesting Point

Were you aware that according to AS 4032.2 -2005. "Tempering valves complying with this standard are intended to automatically limit the temperature of the hot water delivered from the system. Tempering valves complying with this standard are not a substitute for thermostatic mixing valves."

- As per AS4032.3 -2004. B.4.2 Regular inspection, testing and maintenance of a thermostatic mixing valve. The procedure to be followed shall be in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

The minimum activity shall include the following:

- (a) Strainer cleanliness
- (b) Non-return valve operation
- (c) Discharge temperature measured at the nearest outlet to the valve for high and low flow
- (d) The cold water shut-off operation
- (e) The hot water shut-off operation
- (f) The replacement and lubrication of dynamic 'o' rings and seals at intervals not exceeding 5 years from commissioning or such shorter intervals as indicated by the manufacturer.

Where a device is not functioning in accordance with the application requirements, the problem shall be rectified or the device replaced.

Question: Can the above procedure be performed on a Tempering valve?

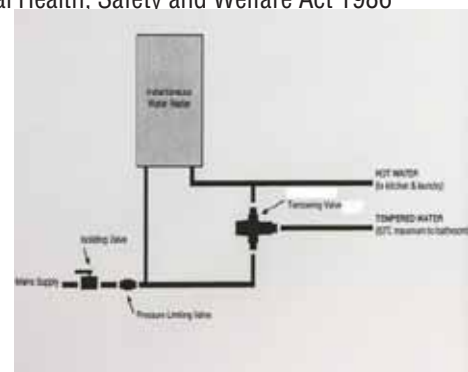
Personal Safety

Stainless steel wall box enclosures can be installed making access and servicing of the TMV easy; it can be done in-situ eliminating some OH&S issues.

Duty of Care

Section 19 of the Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986 (SA) places a duty of care on employers to ensure that an employee is, whilst at work, safe from injury and risks to health and provides that an employer must provide and maintain:

- a safe working environment;
- safe systems of work;
- plant and substances in a safe condition.





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Maintenance Plumbing Cont...

WHY ARE THE TMV'S STILL BEING INSTALLED IN CEILING SPACES?

Why are your employees placed in a confined space to perform their installation and maintenance duties?

Note: the monetary cost for the client, for the plumber to perform these duties in a ceiling area! Hazards to be considered prior to entry into a confined space

- Oxygen deficiency (due to anaerobic or aerobic bacterial activity, organic decomposition or rusting, etc.)
- Toxic or corrosive chemicals and other substances
- Metal surfaces which can conduct electrical or heat energy
- Poorly lit working conditions
- Extreme atmospheric temperatures in Summer
- Access problems (especially during a fire or rescue)
- Awkward or cramped working conditions which can lead to injuries
- Slips, trips and falls
- Hazardous chemicals
- Burning and scalding
- Any other hazard, specific to a particular confined space

What is a confined space?

A confined space is an enclosed or partially enclosed space which, according to AS 2865-2009, is not designed for human occupancy.

Confined spaces may have an atmosphere with potentially harmful contaminants, an unsafe level of oxygen and may have restricted means of entry and exit.

Work health and safety laws set out the legal obligations that must be met by employers before work can commence in a confined space.

The Australian Standard AS 2865-2009 Confined Spaces provides a set of parameters which should be met, including training personnel working within confined spaces.

The legislation will state employers' and employees' legal obligations in relation to working in confined spaces.

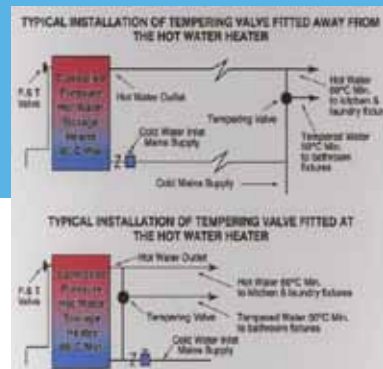
According to the code of practice for confined spaces, before work is carried out in a confined space, all hazards must be identified and risks assessed, each worker must have an entry permit, first aid and rescue procedures must be established and adequate training must be undertaken. Remember there is a duty of care to customers, but also our employees.

Some plumbers are missing out on work because they are quoting the installation of a tempering valve on HWS that are preset as per AS/NZS 3500.4-2003 1.9.3

A water heater complying with AS 3498 and marked with the following:

“THIS APPLIANCE DELIVERS WATER NOT EXCEEDING 50°C IN ACCORDANCE WITH AS 3498.”

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Gas Plumbing

Servicing Type 'A' Gas Appliances

Proper servicing of gas appliances is an essential element in the safe use of gas. An appliance that has not been serviced regularly will not only operate inefficiently but also create an unsafe condition that could lead to an incident that may cause an injury or even death.

Appliance servicing shall be carried out by an appropriately licensed and competent person. Whenever a gas appliance is serviced or repaired, the service person is responsible for ensuring the appliance is operating to the manufacturer's specification and the installation of the appliance being serviced is safe and complies with the requirements of AS/NZ 5601. The following key requirements should be verified by the service person as correct before leaving the appliance operational:

- (a) Assess the worksite for hazards before commencing servicing
- (b) Confirm that the appliance is certified for use in the situation where it is installed and is suitable for the connected gas supply
- (c) Confirm that the appliance is installed in accordance with AS/NZ 5601 and the manufacturer's instructions
- (d) Ensure the test point gas pressure is set to the manufacturer's specification and the gas pressure is constant and unaffected by the operation of other appliances
- (e) Check the flue system on conventionally flued indoor products to ensure that with the main burner(s) operating, there is room air being drawn into the draft diverter and flue products are not consistently spilling from the draft diverter indicating a blocked or partially blocked flue; and
- (f) Confirm that there is an uninterrupted supply of fresh air to indoor appliances in compliance with AS/NZ 5601. If the air supply is via an internal door or wall, check that the adjacent room has the required openings
- (g) On indoor conventionally flued appliance installations check that ventilation fans, air conditioners, exhaust systems, other gas appliances or return air ducts will not cause flue products to be drawn back into the room
- (h) Ensure that flammable and corrosive materials are not stored or used in the vicinity of any gas appliance
- (i) Ensure that combustible items are not placed in the path of flue products in the case of unflued appliances or in contact or close proximity to hot surfaces
- (j) Remove dust and debris build-up within and around an appliance that may be ignited by hot surfaces, flame rollout and electrical contacts. Ensure the adequate supply of fresh air is not inhibited by dust
- (k) Check that external appliances are installed such that the flue terminal has the required clearances from openings to the building (windows, doors, ventilators), from eaves and building corners and from other equipment that may cause flue products to be drawn into the building
- (l) Ensure that any rectification work carried out on wiring, components or pipe work does not compromise the safety of the appliance.

On completion of the work on the appliance, the appliance shall be tested for safe and correct operation.



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RF815A

Commercial Plumbing

Working on the Railroad



Above: General maintenance shed under construction at the Seaford Rail Yard.

The first significant expansion of the rail network in Adelaide in many, many years is currently underway with the Seaford Rail Extension project. It will provide a 5.7 kilometre extension of the dual track rail line from Noarlunga Centre Railway Station to the Seaford District Centre, including:

- stations and park'n'ride facilities at Seaford Meadows and the Seaford District Centre
- a bus interchange at the Seaford District Centre
- a 1.2 kilometre elevated rail bridge over the Onkaparinga Valley and a rail bridge over Old Honeypot Drive
- road bridges over the track at Goldsmith Drive, Seaford Road and Lynton Terrace.

The \$291.2 million Seaford Rail Extension project is being undertaken by Thiess, in a joint venture with McConnell Dowell Constructors which, will significantly improve public transport rail services for the community in the rapidly expanding southern suburbs well into the future.

The southern suburbs have experienced rapid growth in population with the Onkaparinga South Coast area the second fastest growing area between 1991 and 2007. With an additional 9,000 residences in the southern areas of Adelaide, by 2025 there will be greater demand on a number of services including transport. The extension of passenger rail services to the growing population centre of



Above: Seaford Road bridge under construction.

Seaford will significantly improve public transport access to the area. Major construction works commenced in early 2011, with the new line scheduled for passenger operation in late 2013, in line with the completion of the electrification of the Noarlunga line. Providing a rail service to the Seaford District Centre is expected to reduce public transport travel times by up to 10 minutes on a trip to Adelaide.

This service is expected to attract approximately 6,000 public transport trips per weekday and around 1.7 million trips per annum. The existing rail line to Noarlunga has the second highest patronage with only the Gawler line having greater patronage. The extended rail line to Seaford is expected to bring about a significant reduction in cars using the road network resulting in reduced air and noise pollution. The work on the extension of the metropolitan rail network to Seaford is expected to create more than 400 jobs over four years.

Cook & Dowsett were appointed as the plumbing contractor on the project, they have built two trade waste facilities which collect all waste from the general maintenance shed and the graffiti removal facility. Each waste stream is pumped to an oil separator before going to a second trade waste tank. From there the waste goes to the sewer.



Above: Track extension from Noarlunga Centre towards Seaford.

All waste goes to the sewer because the facility is serviced by the Christie's Beach Treatment Plant and all of this water is supplied to the McLaren Vale Recycled Water Scheme.

Staff facilities include kitchen, shower and toilet facilities for the maintenance staff and drivers.

The rail yard is scheduled for completion by the end of April, well ahead of completion of the bridges and rail line. James Goode is the Site Manager for Cooke Dowsett who has been leading the team of plumbers.

In addition to the trade waste facilities, they have also constructed a 2.5Km fire main around the rail depot and its facilities.

They have also constructed shower and toilet facilities for the rail staff who will be assigned to the Seaford depot when it commences operations.



Above: James Goode showing the toilet and shower facilities within the railyard.



Above: Onkaparinga Valley Bridge under construction.



Above: A section of the Onkaparinga Valley Bridge nearing completion.

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Serial Offenders Need to be Stopped Sooner



Western suburbs plumber pinged

Date: 1/03/2012

A negligent plumber from the western suburbs has been suspended and fined by the District Court for performing potentially dangerous work in breach of his registration.

Mr Stavros Giorginis was found guilty in proceedings brought against him by Consumer and Business Services (CBS) after a consumer became concerned about the work he was undertaking on her Ascot Park home. The consumer contracted Mr Giorginis, and paid a \$350 deposit, to replace the bathroom's external gully and underfloor plumbing.

When a visiting relative spotted some serious concerns about the quality of work and the performance of Mr Giorginis, they obtained an inspection from SA Water. The results of the inspection indicated that the work was of poor quality and there was potential that sewerage, odours and dangerous gases may enter the bathroom.

Upon the investigation by CBS, it was discovered that Mr Giorginis was only registered to perform plumbing work under the supervision of a licensed plumber. He breached the Plumbers Gas Fitters and Electricians Act by performing the plumbing work without supervision. Mr Giorginis refused to refund the consumer her money.

Consumer Affairs Commissioner, Paul White, said dodgy traders unfairly leave consumers out-of-pocket and with poor quality work that may require extensive repair. "In most cases, consumers do not receive a refund or remedy from these traders," Mr White said.

"They are also left with the expense to rectify the poor work that was undertaken on their home. South Australian consumers are encouraged to report instances of poor quality and unlicensed trade work so that CBS can get these characters off the street."

In the above article about an electrician who has been stripped of his licence, it is reported that he failed to carry out his work properly 80 times over a period of three years. As a consumer, I am outraged that he offended 80 times before his licence was suspended. That article is a shining light on the failure of the licensing body to protect the integrity of the licence and to protect the consumer.

The Poor Outcomes of Self Regulation

Dodgy plumbing and the ramifications for the industry of the current poor outcomes of self regulation is a major focus of this issue. At the time of going to press, the PIA was due to meet with Deputy Premier John Rau and Minister Tom Koutsantonis to discuss a range of issues in relation to licensing and regulation. Some of our other concerns relate to rumours that:

- There is a proposal to not require certificate IV to obtain a contractors licence
- No fee for certificates of compliance
- Therefore it is unlikely there will be any consumer education funding
- No plumbing inspectors in the Iron Triangle and the south east because, “there is insufficient work to inspect.”

It seems that we are going to see even less enforcement of the regulations than is currently the case. The dilemma for the industry is that government quite rightly wants to reduce red tape. In the days of the E&WS there were about 44 inspectors. Under the move to the OTR a total of 18 staff will be transferred from SA Water including administration staff. Two will be managing the plumbing standards and therefore will play no role in inspection. One will undoubtedly be an office bound manager so it is probable no more than 8 inspectors will be on the road and none in the country.



Let's be clear why we want greater inspection. It's not to increase red tape and increase costs. It's because a small minority will ignore good practice to make a faster and easier dollar. If self regulation worked we would have no need for the police to be policing the road laws. We are also seeing this minority placing a downward pressure on pricing which is especially apparent at present with the economic position. One of the issues that the Office of the Technical

If self regulation worked we would have no need for the police to be policing the road laws

Regulator needs to address, when it becomes responsible for plumbing regulations, is that 1st and 2nd fix are not currently inspected. Self certification in these areas in particular, is allowing unlicensed persons and “cowboys” to go in cheap and dirty. The litany of problems out there is growing.

Consumers are being forced to spend tens of thousands of dollars to rectify plumbing work that should not be necessary. It is even worse when a government agency has been complicit by awarding tenders to persons who do not hold the appropriate licences. Australia is rapidly heading towards the New Zealand “Leaky Building” disaster where over \$1 billion dollars of NZ's housing stock is defective because of shonky construction.

What we want

- a Building Commission that incorporates the three licensed trades
- Continued to be funded in part by the APA Group – gas, ETSA Utilities – electricity and SA Water – plumbing. These utilities should contribute some of the cost to help protect their infrastructure. That contribution should be the subject of negotiation by the relevant parties.
- Consumers should contribute to the adequate resources of the OTR or Building Commission because that becomes their insurance policy of defective and sub standard work. The simplest way is a fee on COC's
- All associations should be involved in the management of the OTR or a Building Commission at board level to ensure the organisation meets its charter
- There must be desk top audits of all plumbers to cross match invoices with COC's. Tradies who choose to avoid issuing COC's by operating on a cash basis will always exist but try going to a bank for a mortgage if you have no recorded income
- Part of the fee must be used to advertise the use of licensed trade's people and that the consumer should receive a COC when you have licensed work done. This will push unlicensed people to the margins
- The PIA estimates the revenue generated from COC's should comfortably allow the OTR to employ 30 compliance officers for plumbing. This in turn should allow 50% inspection of all plumbing. Using technology to inspect more efficiently and software to identify the problem tradespeople will allow resources to focus on the “cowboys” and take a watching brief on the responsible sector of the industry. We know gas and electrical inspection is under resourced
- Technology must be used to deliver efficiencies for industry. COC's need to be able to be completed electronically and an invoice for the number issued, sent at the end of the month, drainage plans and other forms such as the Reimbursement Claim Forms must be able to be done electronically
- Money from the OTR must be allocated for education. Why can't the standards be free to industry? It is farcical that industry must adhere to standards but pay hundreds of dollars to purchase them.

The outcome of all of this should be the majority of “cowboys” either exit the industry or comply with the standards that industry and consumers have a right to expect. The industry will also benefit from not having to compete against pricing based on performing non compliant work. Will we achieve any of this? We don't know but we will undoubtedly need to compromise in some areas. The bottom line is good plumbing done at a fair price by reputable plumbing businesses.

Dodgy Plumbing - Case 1

Case 1 - The Flushing Hand Basin

Mick Finlayson came across this when called out to repair the work of a home maintenance business.

The owner rang Mick reporting that he had water shooting out his basin waste every time he flushed the toilet.

The maintenance person cut into the flushpipe to hook up a hand basin in the next room. Absolute Beauty...

Why do people insist on believing plumbing is easy and that they don't need to use a licensed trades person?



Right: Hand basin hooked up to the flush pipe of the toilet suite



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Dodgy Plumbing Case 2, 3, 4*

In this issue we are including a rogue's gallery of sub standard plumbing photographed by just one member in six months. If one member can gather such an appalling display in such a short space of time, the question needs to be asked... Just how much sub standard plumbing is occurring?



Poo can jump upstream if trained like a salmon



Flexdinger not glued bathroom floor collapsed and whole house cracked



Well sealed floor waste



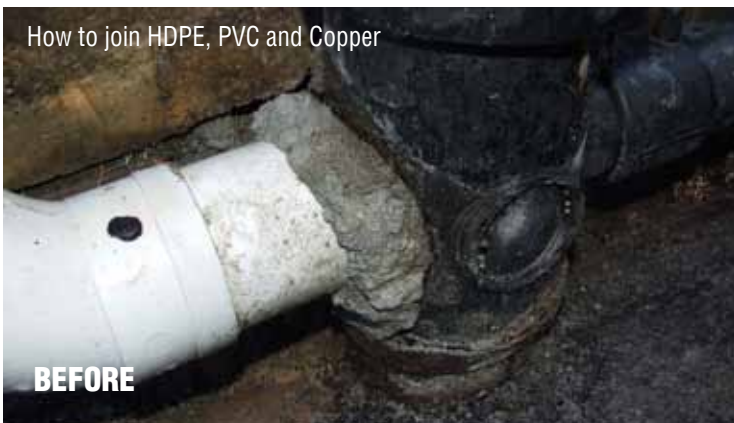
Bathroom floor collapsing due to broken and fallen drain



Silicone will fix it



Down Pipe Dumb



How to join HDPE, PVC and Copper

BEFORE



AFTER The right way...

*This is only a small selection of photographs supplied by a member taken over the past 6 months.

How To Benefit From A Business Health Check

By Philip Arnfield

In my last article I introduced the idea of a Business Health Checklist and offered to provide members with a free copy of my checklist. A number of members contacted me in response to the offer so I have decided to expand on the idea in this article. The Business Health Checklist requires the business owner to provide a positive or negative response to 19 questions and provides a rating for the business based on the responses given.

The questions focus on processes that successful businesses do well. The obvious inference is that if you want your business to be successful, you need to be paying attention to each of the areas of focus. The checklist has 4 columns so that the business owner can carry out the self diagnosis over 4 consecutive months. Many business owners will score poorly at their first attempt. The important thing is not the initial rating but whether the business improves at each subsequent test.

Imagine that your doctor advises you to change your diet and loose 8kg or risk poor health. You decide to accept the advice and you immediately commence a healthier eating and exercise regime. After the first 2 weeks of your healthier lifestyle, you would not weigh yourself and become despondent if you had not lost the 8kg you have set out to lose.

In fact, when you discover you have lost 1kg you would be excited and motivated to continue the process as improvement was being achieved. The Business Health Checklist is the same. As you make improvements in each of the focus areas, you will notice an overall improvement in the performance of your business and you will be motivated to continue the process of improvement.

The 19 focus areas on the checklist are grouped under 5 headings: Management Information; Management Control; Key Relationship Management; Systems & Processes; and Financial Wellbeing. Some members may ask "Are all these areas of focus relevant to plumbing businesses in South Australia?" My answer to that question is this. The areas of focus are only relevant to those businesses that want to improve their performance.

For example, most businesses do not have a formal Management Control Plan (MCP) in place. However a MCP is easy to set up and once established allows, the business owner to track progress against pre determined plans and to manage the business in a systematic way. If after completing the Business Health Checklist, the business owner decided to improve the rating of the business at the time of the next "check up" by implementing a MCP, I am certain that within a few weeks the business owner would notice a great improvement in the way things get done.

This would motivate the owner to work on another area of focus during the following 4 weeks. This is how something as simple as a checklist helps build the momentum of business improvement. If you want to learn more about Management Control Plans or the other areas of focus referred to above a good place to start is at the Build a Better Business workshops being run by the PIASA. Contact Crystal at the PIA office for more details.

If you want a free copy of my Business Health Checklist simply contact me at philip@babb.com.au



ONE DAY build a better business course

SATURDAY 2nd JUNE 2012

Regional members will be given priority to attend this course option

Four Night build a better business course

Tuesday - 29th May, 5th, 19th & 26th June

(Please note course will not be held on the Tuesday after the June long weekend)

To find out more or book your place simply call Crystal on p: 8292 4000

This is simply the best course you will ever do to make your business successful

Business Advice

Advertising - A Whole new brave world

A few events in recent weeks have highlighted the care needed when moving proactively to advertise your services. As members fight to generate new customers in these constrained times, many are advertising for the first time.

Advertising opens your business to a whole new set of rules. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), the Office of Consumer and Business Services (formerly OCBA), the Advertising Standards Bureau and even your local council may all wish to review your conduct.

Advertising is a form of business promotion but it is not a business or marketing plan.

What is marketing?

Kotler and Armstrong (2010) define it as: "Marketing is the social process by which individuals and organisations obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging value with others."

Let's go back first to, why do you want to advertise?

Marketing is how you create an exchange of value. Advertising is one of the ways you may promote your business but is it the only way or the best way? You need to step back from your daily grind of working in the business and work on the business.

First you need to define the *product* that you are marketing

- Are you a residential construction plumber?
- Are you a maintenance plumber?
- Do you do both?
- Are you a specialist plumber with a niche business and customer base?

Second - Set your *pricing*

The PIA has seen several members close their doors in recent weeks. Some have by their own admission closed because they were losing money. They had dropped their prices to an unsustainably low level in order to "compete."

You need to understand your cost structures, if you are selling your services at below cost let alone below a profitable level, there will be only one outcome. It's sad to say but we will see more members close their doors before the current conditions improve. If you haven't done the Build a Better Business Course yet, contact Crystal and enroll in the next available course.

Third - Define the *place* you find your customers

If you are a residential construction plumber your channel to market is builders. If you are a commercial construction plumber your channel is commercial builders and developers. Maintenance plumbers have the community at large or businesses that need their premises serviced, two very different places to find your customers. So place determines the method of promotion.

Define how best to *promote* your business

The promotional mix can consist of:

- Direct Marketing
- Exhibitions/Showcase
- Publicity
- Public Relations
- Internet – including Facebook and Twitter
- Personal Selling
- Advertising

Advertising can include:

- Outdoor Advertising – including your vehicles. Signwriting your van will cost less than a year's advertising in Yellow pages and you will be seen regularly in your district. Consumers often like to hire a local tradesperson
- Newspaper/ Trade Journals
- Television
- Internet
- Radio

Plan before you spend

- Analyse the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities for your business.
- Prepare a business plan, it doesn't have to be a long one, it can be as short as 3 pages. What you are doing is focussing your thinking on your business and setting your ideas out so that you have a plan you can follow.

Businesses should not jump into advertising until they have some level of planning as to how this will assist in growing your business. Advertising may be a totally inappropriate way of growing your business in the market segment that you occupy.

Advertising can be Clever

One plumbing business has recently copied some other companies who have left their sign written trucks in prominent locations to attract attention. It's clever free advertising.

Where it falls down is when you leave a vehicle in the same spot day after day. What message are you giving?

Leaving a van in the same location day after day, rather than promoting the business may even suggest the business is no longer operating.

Motorists passing the vans may regard the advertising negatively and consider the company is on its last legs.

All advertising needs to be measured. How do you measure the effectiveness of this advertising?

Security of Payment

The New South Wales Supreme Court recently highlighted the dangers of endorsing every invoice as a Payment Claim under the Security of Payment Act in NSW.

The legislation is very similar to SA so the decision has implications for this state. Under the legislation, all your claims need to be consolidated into one account and only this account should be marked as a Payment Claim under the Security of Payment Act.

If you send five invoices in a month all for different items of work and stamp them as a Payment Claim under the Security of Payment Act, only one can proceed. It is therefore very important that invoicing is done carefully to maximise your ability to force payment under the legislation.

Good news is that two members have made successful claims under the legislation, with one contractor initially trying to avoid payment in the mistaken belief the legislation didn't apply to him. It did and he paid.

We encourage all members to use the legislation carefully but vigorously. If the tardy payers don't get the message, well that's just too bad!



Above: Robert Taylor and Peter Fraser from Rehaus presenting David Barraclough from Precise Plumbing with his raffle prize for attending the World Plumbing Day BBQ.

Momar Mo-Flo

One of our members was disappointed recently when he was called out by a plumber to clear a blocked drain. Whilst he was using his Air Ram on a floor trap, a stream of water containing Momar Mo Flo, shot up his leg. Fortunately it was sufficiently diluted to not cause a chemical burn.

It is a serious concern if plumbers are using Momar Mo Flo without understanding the risks and worse if they sub contract the clearance to a fellow plumber and then don't warn him they have used chemicals in attempting to clear the blockage.

As a result of this incident and his concern about clients using chemicals to clear blockages and not telling him, he is now carrying a laminated copy of the recent article about Momar Mo Flo to highlight to customers the importance of telling him if they have used any chemical in the drain.

It's a great idea and one we would recommend using. A copy of the article suitable for you to print off and laminate has been placed on the PIA website in the Work Health and Safety section of the PIA website section.

Rau commits to trade licence reforms

The PIA and other construction industry associations met with Deputy Premier and Minister for Business Services and Consumers John Rau on the 2nd April.

The meeting was prompted by concerns about the speed and efficiency in which Consumer and Business Services (CBS) was issuing licences.

"I will be discussing these ideas further with CBS and the trades with a view to introducing suitable reforms as soon as possible. While CBS has already introduced service improvements, it is clear we need to do more," Rau said.



Above: Guests at the World Plumbing Day



World Plumbing Day

A BBQ was held in a local park at Mile End on 9th March to celebrate World Plumbing Day. World Plumbing Day is all about celebrating the importance of plumbing in providing a healthy, safe and sustainable community. It's too easy to forget the role plumbing plays in protecting lives.

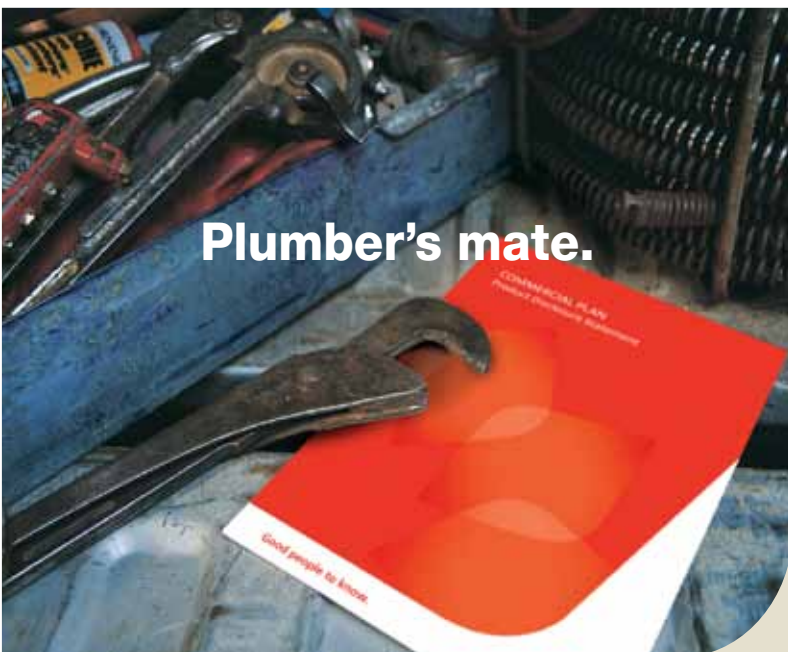
Above: Garry Reynolds from Warren Plumbing winner of the standards with Robert Beard

Ideas suggested at the meeting include increasing the renewal period from one year to two, three or five years; interim licenses while applications are being considered and a pre-approval process for apprentices to streamline applications. "Hard-working people depend on the timely issuing of licences so they can get on with their work," he said.

"The process of issuing and renewing these licences is rigorous, and it needs to be. The safety of tradespeople and the public is paramount and the consequence of licensing an unqualified person could be disastrous, particularly in the building, plumbing and electrical trades.

"Having said that, the issuing of these licences is a core business for Government and the service we provide should be excellent."

A number of other matters were raised at the meeting and the PIA was meeting with the State Government again on the 4th April to further pursue these issues.



WFI is a leading business insurance specialist. From the experience gained over many years of insuring plumbers, WFI has developed Commercial Plan, an insurance package that can be tailored to your business insurance requirements. We believe the best way to work with our clients is face to face. That's why we have 24 Area Managers located throughout South Australia. Find out for yourself why WFI are good people to know by contacting your local WFI Area Manager.

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Good people to know.



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Phrasing your Advertising

The wording of advertising is critical. A consumer recently lodged a complaint against a member with Consumer and Business Services.

The consumer complained that the member's advertising was misleading and deceptive because they advertised no call out fee and the plumber after 20 minutes of investigating the purported leaking toilet pan, discovered that it was in fact excessive water from the consumer mopping the floor. As the plumber actually performed no work other than identifying there was no leak, the consumer complained and refused to pay.

Legal advice from the PIA barrister is that this is a very grey area. Advertising that there is no call out fee can be risky. The problem with advertising is that too much information will cause your message to be lost. There is often insufficient space to put terms and conditions into an advert which results in the potential for a claim of misleading and deceptive conduct to be mounted against you.

Putting disclaimers on your website will not help because the customers can say they never use the Internet and so were not aware of your terms and conditions.

The customer could therefore claim that he called the plumber for advice and therefore should not be charged because you have advertised "No call out fee."

Most of us know what is meant by the phrase but a pedantic customer could well avoid paying. It is better for you to advertise that you do not charge for the plumber's travel to and from the customer.

The problem is finding a short way of writing it. However we live in litigious times and with a pool of customers determined to pay little or nothing it may prove to be a strategy that will require you to forego payment. Additionally, you may have to argue with Consumer and Business Services that your advertising is not misleading or deceptive.

If in doubt, it is wise to seek legal advice before proceeding with an advertisement that could expose you to prosecution.



Business Development for Plumbers in the Northern Territory



- Consultation obligations – workers and training
- Role of unions – entry on sites
- Transitional arrangements
- Model WHS regulations
- General risk and workplace management
- Hazardous works
- Management of risk of falls
- Confined spaces
- Plant and structures
- Construction work – management plans

A handout of the presentation will be available to members via the PIA website in the Northern Territory section.

For more information please contact NT WorkSafe
Phone; 1800 019 115
Email; ntworksafent.gov.au
www.worksafe.nt.gov.au

Work Health Safety Legislation

The PIA in conjunction with Charles Darwin University (CDU) organised a successful Business Development Seminar for Plumbers in the NT during March.

The introduction of the new Work Health Safety legislation in the NT has caused many businesses to review their current structures to ensure they comply with the new legislation.

The seminar held at CDU in Darwin, with video links to Katherine and Alice Springs, provided participants with a greater understanding of the legislation.

Anna McGill from NT Worksafe delivered a very comprehensive presentation that highlighted the need for greater understanding amongst the construction sector.

Key elements included;

- Person Conducting Business or Undertaking (PCBU) – Duties of Care
- Standard of your Work Health and Safety Duty – What is reasonably practicable

BusinessMate - The Solution for Compliance and Management

The WHS presentation was followed by a presentation by PIA on the newly developed Businessmate program.

The PIA developed system is a unique system that aligns all the key business components into an integrated network of data management control.

The system is designed for all sized plumbing businesses, some of the components will be more important to some businesses where other components will be attractive to others.

The key elements that the PIA see that will benefit members in the Northern Territory especially as the WHS legislation becomes a major factor in the reshaping of the construction industry include;

Northern Territory

Business Seminar Northern Territory



1. Ensuring compliance with the WHS Act.
2. Reducing the risk of injury in the workplace
3. Ensuring compliance with the relevant award and the Fair Work Act
4. Streamlining employee management
5. More efficient management of business
6. Improving productivity
7. Accurate reporting and data management
8. HR management system – policies and procedures

BusinessMate is becoming a popular system amongst manufacturers and government agencies.

Do your business justice and ask for a demonstration from the team at the PIA.

The final component of the business development seminar was the presentation by John Hughes from the local Business Enterprise Centre (BEC).

The key messages from John included;

BUSINESSMATE
INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

"Businessmate has delivered a 'one-stop-shop' to manage many aspects of our company – assets, people, safety and so much more. The system is continually being improved with no wait for the next software release!"

Giving this quote was quite hard because there is so much I like about Businessmate!"

Jackie MacLean
Gold Medal Services
Darwin NT



- Some information on the sub contractor management and the difference compared to direct employees
- Independent contracts and the importance of having sound management advice / structures.

On behalf of the PIA and CDU we wish to thank those plumbers and industry stakeholders who have supported the initiatives to unite the industry in the NT.

We will be working hard to ensure the level of communication and the training opportunities continue to all sectors of the plumbing industry.

Financial Advice

ATO's contractor crackdown

ACCOUNTANTS are tipping tens of thousands of people could get caught up in a Australian Taxation Office (ATO) crackdown on misuse of personal service income regulations. Nexia Court & Co partner Sean Urquhart says the ATO has been sending letters to tax agents and individuals warning of upcoming audits of 2010 accounts.

This is focused on consultants and contractors who operate as a sole trader or through a company, partnership and classify their income as personal services income.

"The personal service legislation goes more than a decade, and came in because everyone was an employee on Friday but came back as a contractor on Monday," Nexia Court & Co Sydney-based partner Sean Urquhart says.

The benefit of this was qualifying for the company tax rate of 30%, rather than personal income tax rates.

But Urquhart says the ATO has taken note of people interpreting the legislation to allow them to distribute income to family members, for example. This misuse, he says, is quite prevalent.

These notice to audit letters generally spur people into action, Urquhart says, giving them the opportunity to make a voluntary disclosure to trim penalties. It also comes as the government seeks to claw back revenue to return the budget to surplus.

"If you come forward and say you've made an error, the ATO will remove a substantial amount of those penalties," he says. To classify as personal services income, a majority of an individual's income must come from labour, rather than materials or tools, the ATO says.

There are further tests, such as no more than 80% in one year coming from one client or associate of the client. The following are not PSI:

- Income from selling or supplying goods.
- Income from an income-producing asset, such as a bulldozer or printing press.
- Granting a right to use property, such as copyright or a computer program.
- Income from a business structure.

Madeleine Heffernan

www.smartcompany.com.au

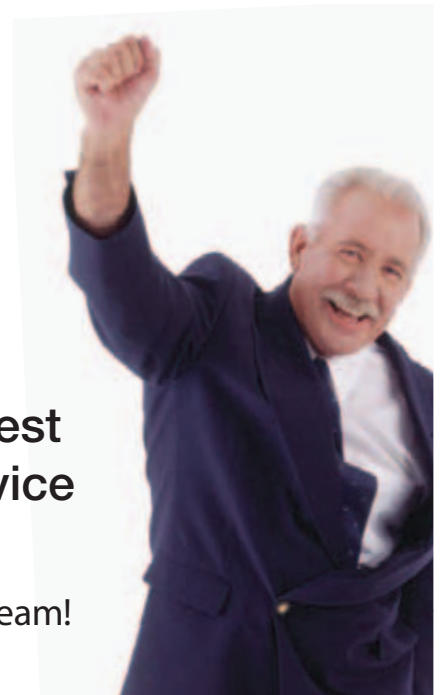
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JB'S SOAP BOX



If you happened to see a copy of the Melbourne Age on Monday 2nd April you may have seen the article I came across when I bought a paper whilst visiting my family in Melbourne.

I may be getting too old and cynical but I am not surprised. Most of us won't be terribly fussed but I know that there are a heck of a lot of plumbers, at present, heading up to the mines to work.

The last thing these fellas need is to have roadblocks put in their way as they head interstate looking for work, until the construction industry turns around. There are also plumbers who live close to a state border who for years have had customers on both sides of the border and to look after them they have had to carry licences from two states.

It looks like they'll have to wait a little longer. The states agreed to set up the national licensing system at a Council of Australian Governments' meeting in 2008. Maybe if we didn't have nine governments fingers in the pie we could get things happening a lot faster.

The Chinese can build a city of over 100,000 people in six years but we can't even introduce one licence system in four years. Plumbers, gasfitters, electricians, refrigeration engineers and real estate agents were to be the first on 1st July 2012. It's now looking like being 2013.

Apparently basic infrastructure to support the change is not yet in place. Nominations for the National Occupational Licensing Authority (NOLA) board closed in March last year but it took almost 12 months for the board, headed by Elizabeth Crouch, to be appointed.

There is still no CEO appointed, even though the position was first advertised 12 months ago. If the states are still administering the actual issuing of a licence why does it take nearly four years to introduce a national licensing scheme?



Either the Prime Minister needs to be polishing her shoe leather on someone's backside or the Minister does. I suspect each states' bureaucrats have been arguing with each other ever since the scheme was announced and it's only when the spotlight is turned on these matters, that things start to happen.

They say that there's another rabbit plague building. Maybe it's time to do a bit of spotlighting.

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Hot Products

CliniMix Thermostatic Mixing Valves and Tempering Valves - A New range from Galvin Engineering.

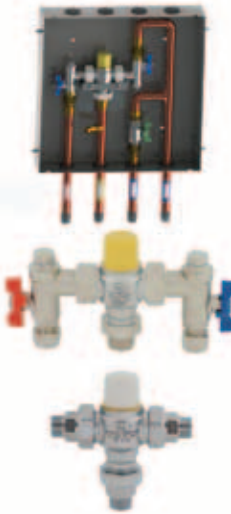
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LWG Free Flow Pump

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The Freeflow delivers a flow rate of up to 60 litres per minute and has built in features to ensure that if the power supply is interrupted or your tank runs out of water it will automatically switch from tank to mains pressure water.

HiFlow Inline Filter

Following the success of the innovative HiFlow Inline Filter, Water Filters Australia have launched an extensive and competitively priced product range exclusive to the plumbing trade.



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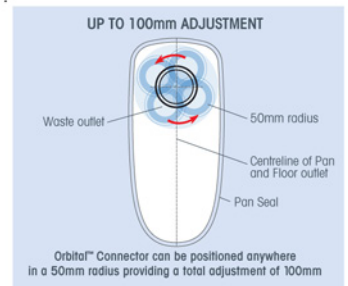
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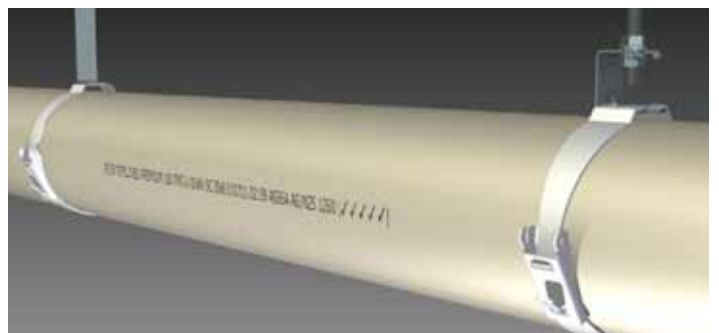
Iplex Pipelines has just introduced a new pipe hanger for the commercial and residential market that will save you up to 80% installation time when compared to conventional pipe hangers. Visit www.iplex.com.au to view the installation video to see how faster, simpler and safer they are to use.

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Iplex Pipelines

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Hot Products Cont...

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- BCA compliant - conforms to the Building Code of Australia (BCA-2009)
- 2mm aperture – the finest mesh in our range, ideal for small leaf trees and fine debris
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Legal Advice

Dismissing ill or injured employees

Tim Capelin reviews a case concerning the dismissal and reinstatement of an employee with a long history of injury and sickness, and its implications for employers.

The decision of Fair Work Australia to reinstate a dismissed employee who had approximately 14 years of injury/ illness affected employment, is a reminder to employers of the need for attention to detail in considering whether to implement such terminations.

In a December 2011 case – Ms V v Ambulance Victoria [2011] FWA 8576, the facts were briefly as follows. Ms V was employed as a paramedic and was involved in a work related traffic accident in 1996 and during the subsequent years was unable to work at times due to factors associated with that original accident.

Ms V was assessed by the workers compensation insurer as being unfit to return to work, an assessment Ms V rejected. Eventually Ms V's employment was terminated on medical grounds by her employer, Ambulance Victoria.

The employer based its decisions upon medical reports it did not show to Ms V and which did not consistently support the view that Ms V couldn't perform her role. The material errors of the employer, were:

- acting on the basis that the evidence of inability to fulfil the inherent requirements of the job was clear, when it was not, and
- not consulting with the employee in relation to the basis for the employer believing the employee could no longer fulfil the inherent requirements of the job.

In handling such matters employers need to work through the mine field created by workers compensation legislation, discrimination laws and the Fair Work Act. In doing this, employers need to:

- (a) obtain current medical evidence setting out the employee's condition and any ongoing limitations
- (b) determine the breadth of the employee's position and clearly define what duties comprise the inherent requirements of the position



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Legal Advice

Dismissing ill or injured employees

(c) consider whether the current medical evidence suggests the employee has limitations which prevent the employee from being able to carry out the inherent requirements of the position

(d) consider whether any limitations may be overcome by reasonable accommodations by the employer

(e) check that relevant time limits in the Fair Work Act regarding temporarily ill employees, and workers compensation legislation, have passed

(f) consult with the employee in relation to the preliminary findings arising from (a) to (d) above

(g) follow up matters raised by the employee, and

(h) only proceed with the termination when the employer is confident the evidence supports a view that:

- the employee is unable to do the inherent requirements of the job
- that will not change within the reasonably foreseeable future
- there are no reasonable accommodations that can be made to enable the employee to carry out the inherent requirements of the job, and

- relevant statute based prohibition periods have passed.

For further information contact:

Tim Capelin, Partner t +61 2 9253 9936

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Legal Advice Cont...

Employment Law and Social Media - Recent Developments

The cyber-world of social media and the internet creates an increasing layer of legal risk for employers if such sites are misused by employees, particularly where employers provide employees with email and internet access at work. The raft of potential liabilities include defamation and workplace bullying and harassment. A more critical issue is the extent to which employers may rely on information accessed or posted on the internet and social media in a disciplinary context.

Traditionally, it has been difficult for employers to place prohibitions on the conduct of employees outside of work hours, unless the conduct has a sufficient connection with the employment. The wide-reaching nature of social media sites and the internet generally is making it easier for employers to establish a sufficient connection with employment in such circumstances.

However, as the cases highlight below, having a comprehensive email, internet and social media policy is essential to establish the 'sufficient connection' with employment. Companies using BusinessMate have access to a Social Media Policy they can implement in their business.

Recent decisions

Recently, in the decision of *Griffiths v Rose*, the Federal Court of Australia considered whether an employer (the Commonwealth) was entitled to monitor an employee's use of its laptop computer outside of office hours, and then use the information it obtained to justify terminating the employee's employment. The employee was dismissed after an investigation revealed the employee had accessed pornographic material in his home, whilst using his own internet connection, but whilst using the employer's laptop computer.

The employer had in place a policy which stated that "employees are prohibited from using departmental facilities to deliberately access, display, download, distribute, copy or store... pornography." In affirming the dismissal, the court reinforced the right of an employer to take disciplinary action when the conduct is sufficiently connected with the employee's employment.

In this instance, the policy clearly prohibited the conduct in question, even though it took place outside of work hours, in the employee's home and at the employee's own cost. More recently, in *Strutsel v Linfox*, Fair Work Australia ordered that an employee be reinstated despite the employee making derogatory remarks about his manager on his Facebook page.

Importantly, the employer had no policy dealing with social media and the employee believed that his Facebook page was private. In these circumstances, the termination of the employee's employment was held to be unfair. With these cases highlighting that employment obligations can extend beyond the office and outside of work, it is increasingly important for employers and employees to find a balance in the appropriate use of social media sites.

How can employers regulate social media in the workforce?

The key protection for employers is ensuring there is a thorough internet and social media policy, and that policy is reviewed regularly. Similarly, just as social media sites change and evolve, so should the policy.

An employer is more likely to be in a position to successfully justify a dismissal if it has a clear policy in place. A social media policy must be clear in its expectations of employees, so too should be the consequences for non-compliance.

Even if the use of social media is banned in a particular workplace, consideration must also be given to conduct which may occur outside of the workplace. Some common areas which social media policies cover include:

- Prohibiting the inappropriate use of social media and the internet whilst using the employer's property;
- Prohibiting using the employer's name, whether directly or indirectly in social media;
- Prohibiting any bullying and harassment of fellow co-workers on social media sites;
- Reinforcing that any confidential information acquired through the employment relationship must remain confidential and must not be the subject to any posts on social media sites; and
- Prohibiting the posting of inappropriate comments, including comments about co-workers, customers and clients.

Every workplace is different and will have differing expectations. Therefore, a social media policy is an important tool for defining the standards of behaviour which are expected.

For more specific information on any of the material contained in this article please contact Lincoln Smith on 8210 1203 or lsmith@normans.com.au.



Legal Advice Cont...

What can be done about bad design which causes safety hazards?



We were recently contacted by a building owner who was concerned about significant safety hazards facing workers attending the building to perform maintenance work on certain items of plant and equipment. The hazards were caused by the poor design of the building and were placing the building owner in a perilous position. Fortunately the proposed Work Health Safety Act provides some comfort to building owners in this situation (albeit, at the expense of designers).

The building owner in question was particularly worried about plumbers having to climb an extension ladder and stand in a confined space without 3 points of safety contact when performing maintenance work. This was the result of poor design by the plumbing contractor who designed the plumbing system.

Specific duties under the proposed Work Health Safety Act

The proposed Work Health Safety Act requires any person who conducts a business or undertaking ("PCBU") and who manages or controls plant to be responsible for carrying out specific duties relating to plant safety. This includes, but is not restricted to, building owners. The proposed Act and Regulations also recognise that design is often implicated as a cause of fatalities, diseases and injuries to workers, users and the public. As such, the proposed Act contains broad third party duties that will apply in order to reduce the effects of risks originating from design.

The proposed Act states that a person who designs plant or structures must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the plant or structure is without risk to the health and safety of persons (including those who use the plant or structure for its primary intended purpose as well as those persons involved in carrying out other activities related to the intended purpose such as storage, dismantling or disposal). This is known as an 'upstream' duty.

The upstream duty places a statutory obligation on designers in relation to safety, which will require them to plan for safety during all phases of a building's life cycle. This includes the construction, maintenance, repair and service stages of a building or a structure.

Consultation

The proposed regulations set out various consultation obligations. This includes the requirement for a person who commissions construction work to consult with the designer about how to ensure that risks to health and safety arising from the design during the construction work are eliminated and/or minimised.

In addition, the designer of a structure that is to be constructed must provide a written report about the hazards relating to the design.

The report must specify hazards that, so far as the designer is reasonably aware, create a risk to the health or safety of persons who are to carry out any construction work on the structure.

The designer is responsible for passing on the report to the person who commissioned the design. The aim of the consultation process is to reduce the compounding effect in design decision-making processes that increase the risk of exposure to hazards down the line.

The obligations in the proposed Act highlight that the duty of care with respect to health and safety is a shared responsibility between builders, owners, designers and other specialists.

The key point to remember is that the onus for health and safety is not solely the responsibility of the building contractor.

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Apprentices

Hallett Cove Trade Training Centre opens for business



The Federal Government's Trade Training Centre Initiative has finally come to fruition at the Hallett Cove R-12 School.

Peter Wheatland, the VET Coordinator, in identifying the best provider for Certificate 1 in Construction (Plumbing) selected the course developed by the PIA. Additionally the PIA has developed a course for Year 12 which will provide continuity in the delivery of the program.

The idea was first proposed in late 2008 when the Federal Government offered secondary schools, nationwide, to apply for grants to establish dedicated Trade Training Centres in local high schools for the instruction of trade based VET (Vocational Education and Training) courses that meet the needs of their local area.

Hallett Cove was successful in gaining a grant from the Federal Government for 1.1 million for the construction and establishment of its Trade Training Centre choosing Plumbing and Electrotechnology (electrical trades) as the focus of their Trade Training Centre.

Detailed planning, in conjunction with DECD (formally DECS), government planning authorities and the RTO's associated with the delivery of these competencies, led to the design of a workshop that can cater for the instructional needs of plumbing and electrical trades to senior secondary students.

Construction was completed late last year and the first students to use the centre started in February this year.

The Hallett Cove TTC is part of the Southern Adelaide and Fleurieu Trade School (SAFTS) which involves schools from the Southern Adelaide and Fleurieu area.



Member schools are Aberfoyle Park HS, Christies Beach HS, Eastern Fleurieu Schools, Hallett Cove school, Mount Compass AS, Reynella East College, Seaford 6 12 School, Victor Harbor HS, Willunga HS, Wirreanda HS, Yankalilla AS and Kangaroo Island Community School.

Each school specialises in a different trade/career field that will support the needs of their community.

Students from the SAFTS schools travel to the school that offers their career choice, one day per week, to enable them to gain certificate accreditation in their selected trade.

Vet education is directed primarily at year 11 and 12 students, but selected year 10 students can also be involved. The trades offered at Hallett Cove attract students from as far away as Victor Harbor and Strathalbyn.



This requires a large commitment for both the students and parents who, in most cases, need to provide transport. The courses offered at Hallett Cove are Certificate 1 in Construction (with a plumbing focus), which is supported by the CITB and Certificate 2 in Electronics, which leads to entry into the electrical trades.

Rob Kavanagh, the PIA's VET in Schools Coordinator, delivers part of the course and supports Peter Wheatland in the delivery of the remaining components. Where possible the PIA assists with work placement.

The TTC will have, when fully established and equipped, a fully functional sandpit for the laying of drains and sewer pipes, areas for wall frame construction, welding facilities (electric and gas), sheet metal capabilities and all necessary equipment to meet the requirements of Certificate 2 Electronics.

The long term benefits to the students attending the SAFTS schools will be huge, allowing students to make more informed career choices when they leave school.

For those students who decide that plumbing is the career they wish to pursue, the PIA has assisted several in gaining apprenticeships and indeed has several who belong to the PIA Group Training Scheme.



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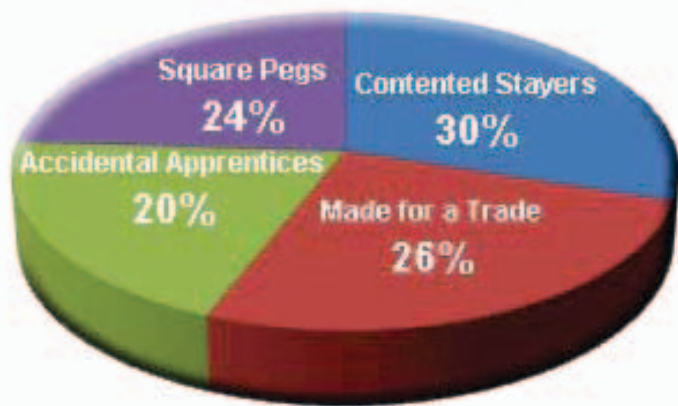
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Apprentices Cont...

A fair deal for apprentices and employers



The problem of trade skill shortages appears almost intractable. Despite a decade's worth of investment in the apprenticeship system, and massive levels of research, debate and media coverage, the number of apprentices completing their apprenticeship has remained fairly constant. More people are starting an apprenticeship, but more (almost half) are failing to complete.

One in three apprentices is likely to leave their apprenticeship in the first year. In 2011, the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training commissioned Quay Connection and their associates to look at this issue from a different perspective.

In the article that follows, Mary Dickie and Rod McDonald outline the fresh insights that have come from the first ever project to tell us about the attitudes, values and experiences that shape the decisions that employers and apprentices make.

What's the problem with apprenticeships? It's a question we have all been trying to resolve for many years and it's become more pressing as the relentless demand for trade skills consistently outstrips supply.

Despite the common myths, it isn't the nature of the work, or the image of trades, or even the money that's the problem – although all may be factors impacting completions.

Our research suggests that it is more complex and more obvious than that - it is about the people, the employers, and apprentices and the attitudes, values and expectations they bring to an apprenticeship. Our research put the spotlight on three clusters of issues that impact on success

Times have changed

We wanted to know if the apprenticeship model measured up for 21st century young people and their bosses. While the model has remained largely the same for decades, the primary moving parts have changed dramatically:

“Young people have changed this generation is a distant cousin to the green teenagers who used to fill apprenticeship places; they are older, better educated, more worldly, and used to negotiating.”
Professor Rod McDonald

Work has changed. There is a shift to white collar and higher skilled work, and employers recruit fewer full time workers, more casuals, part timers and subcontractors. Training and learning have changed.

Training is a given in a good job; we expect to learn online as well as on the job, and we expect to advance as we acquire new skills.

The total experience

The key to success remains the “total apprenticeship experience” the way that all the elements of the apprenticeship come together for the apprentice. For current apprentices, an apprenticeship is first and foremost a job, not a training placement, but they understand that it is a job with trade-offs and payoffs. However, a lack of fairness can tip them away from their commitment to completion.

One size does not fit all

Because the total experience matters, we wanted to understand how attitudes, values and experiences influence apprentices and their employers. So for the first time in Australia, some 1,200 apprentices and 500 employers were sampled on these factors, and through this research, we identified key profiles of the apprentices and their employers.

The apprentices

Made for a Trade – it's what they always wanted to do

These are the apprentices everyone wants - young, committed, positive about their trade, enjoying the work, relishing their new skills and never think about giving up. They knew what they were getting into, think they are treated fairly and like the career choice. They value the support of family and friends, they like their boss, and are the most likely to complete.

Contented Stayers-it's all good

These apprentices might be a bit more relaxed but they made an active choice to learn this trade and are happy about their experience.

Varied work and learning on-the-job is critical, their co-workers are important but the most important factor is the boss. They are very likely to complete but some will leave if the “boss factor” isn't right.

Accidental Apprentices – they just fell into the trade

These apprentices are not having a good time. Their attitudes are negative and their experience has not been positive. They are there by accident, not design and are not passionate about the trade.

Apprentices Cont...

A fair deal for apprentices and employers

While they see the long term payoff; they're not sure that it balances the trade-offs. They are already looking for something better.

Square Pegs - a really bad fit

These apprentices are seriously unhappy. This wasn't their first choice of career and most should never have signed up. Their negative attitudes are compounding negative experiences, and they risk giving up. They are more likely to be female, older than average (25+) and working in automotive, hairdressing or commercial cookery.

The employers

Trade makers – good guys, backbone of the system

Trade makers have positive attitudes and experiences. They are experienced mentors, have strong recruitment practices, take advice, and are realistic. They are often larger businesses (50+ employees) but there are also many smaller businesses in this segment as well. They believe strongly in growing their workforce and in the value of skills in their industry. They are also good managers, able to make a return on their investment in apprentices within the first two years.

Traditionalists – nothing's good and it's everyone's fault

The traditionalists struggle to effectively handle contemporary apprenticeships. Many of them are stuck in the past and they lack skills to mentor today's apprentice.

They don't take advice, they think that apprentices cost them money, and they can't get a return on investment until the fourth year. Although they think they are a great boss, their apprentices don't agree, and they often have low or no completions. They are more likely to be in a city-based small business (1-5).

Boss at the crossroads – low confidence and skill, outcome uncertain

For these employers in SMEs, completion rates can go either way. For them, the match between employer and apprentice is key; while they have positive attitudes, the experience challenges them. They lack confidence, are unsure what they are in for, or how to do it well. Despite that, they can get a return on investment within the first two years.

The outcome of this research presents some stark choices

Among current apprentices, around 25% should probably follow another path and a further 20% are ambivalent about their experiences and don't rate their chances of completion highly. Many shouldn't have been recruited in the first place, the rest are having a fairly miserable apprenticeship experience. Around one-third of employers don't currently have the attitudes or skills to employ and train an apprentice, many getting few or none of their apprentices qualified.

They are quite negative about apprentices and are not providing positive experiences for apprentices. To get better results, their attitudes, management style and work practices would have to change.

This tells us that there is a significant opportunity to improve the numbers and proportion of apprentices who complete their apprenticeship by focusing on the pool from which both employers and apprentices are recruited and by providing better support. If we stop focusing on the 'sale' and limit recruitment to those most likely to succeed.

We would cut raw numbers, but completion rates would improve and the system would produce as many, if not more, qualified tradespeople at a considerably lower cost to government and business.

One of the basic rules of business is that you need to invest most of your resources where you are going to get the best return. The apprenticeship system could well do the same. Another basic rule is that you don't over-promise and under-deliver.

So we also need to focus on improving the experience for the boss and the apprentice. If we do that, we can generate more positive word-of-mouth and that would provide the foundation for a steady increase in the number of employers and young people who are attracted, and committed, to apprenticeships.

To view the full report, go to www.bvet.nsw.gov.au/publications.html and look for A Fair Deal - Apprentices and their Employers in NSW.



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