

A word from the President

Once again there has been a lot of interest in blind cord safety, especially after a recent child fatality in Scotland. Whilst the risk posed by blind cords is extremely small the Association has actively promoted labelling blinds with information on the possible dangers for a number of years.

BBSA warning labels and tags are available to all members that manufacture and supply all types of blinds with a cord. However, we have now gone further by forming a policy that all BBSA members will abide by and actively promote.

At the AGM on 10th June 2009 the BBSA announced a new initiative on blind cord safety. In addition to increased safety for the consumer there are some obvious advantages for all members and the whole industry. By providing

child safety products and retrofitting child safety devices where appropriate you will ensure you discharge your responsibilities correctly,

The message is clear "Make it Safe". The onus is on everyone – wholesaler, manufacturer, retailer and key supplier to inform the purchaser of the potential danger, however slight, and offer suggestions to reduce risk. Of course the ultimate responsibility lies with the parent/carer but we must be seen to be offering pro-active advice.

When talking to your customers take note of other blinds in the property that may pose a hazard. Who is your customer? Do they have a family, do they have grand children and are there vulnerable people in the home? Be inquisitive as questions show you care. Offer to retrofit tiebacks or cleats to tidy cords away on

existing blinds and curtains. Corded or looped operating systems on new blinds should incorporate child safety features.

Alternatively offer systems, which do not feature cords or loops. There may be opportunities to promote motorisation or wand control for example.

The Association is at the forefront of setting the standards of blind cord safety even if this means at times going beyond the prevailing legislation. This is a major initiative by the Association for the industry's benefit and the benefit of our customers.



So how's business?

We thought it was a key time to ask this question so Openings spoke to twelve BBSA members on the retail side, throughout the UK. Here's a summary of what they had to say.

Although always difficult to generalise, especially from a small number, sales for a majority of companies are at reasonable levels. However only a couple of companies said that business was better than at this time last year. Yet it had certainly improved on the early part of the year, which was characterised by slow sales, a very competitive environment and price reductions much in the same way as the general retail trade.

Most believed (and hoped) that the current pattern or better would continue but as many said it was much too early to be optimistic that a more regular trend had been established. "The market is still up and down with no real regular flow," said one retailer in Northern Ireland, whilst another in Liverpool commented "You cannot feel any degree of certainty. Not so long ago when we had a poor period we would just put it down to an unusual blip and know it would come good. Now you wonder if it's the start of another downward trend."

Surprisingly, business policies and attitude had not changed too dramatically. Of course instances of staff lay-offs and a much tighter control of costs were evident. However there were extremes at either end of the scale. A company in the South of England had been forced to reduce staff numbers considerably and move to smaller premises. They commented "Our high street has died, when will it all end?" In contrast another Southern company opened a new large showroom twelve months ago with a considerable investment and, as they said,

"We had to be totally committed to make it work." It seems to have paid off. The company has done very well and interestingly a key factor had been the much wider choice that they have been able to offer. "It has given us a real competitive advantage which is vital in a contracting marketplace."

Trends in the sales of individual products were difficult to identify although Roman blinds were mentioned, a number of times, as a product that had retained good levels of sales. Also within those companies that sold awnings there was a lot more confidence about the fortunes of this product, given the sales last year. A retailer in the Midlands observed that there was much more general interest in awnings, perhaps reflecting the willingness of customers to invest in their gardens. However there was also increased competition from the cheaper awnings sold through the DIY retailers.

Overall the mood was one of cautious optimism. It's certainly not a bed of roses but it's not a fallow field either. Many of the companies, especially in retail, are small businesses. This gives them a great deal of flexibility to help maintain a pragmatic balance between necessary cost control and having the resources to build sales.

Please tell us how your business is doing and give us any other comments that you have about the future and how the BBSA can help.

Please email info@openingsid.com.

All information will only be used to make general comments and individual companies will not be identified.

New Members

Just Fabrics Redditch 01527 63246

Owner Terry Yarnold has worked for the company for eight years and bought it three years ago. The vast majority of work is in the contract market – hospitals, schools, universities etc., and the company has recently won a large contract to supply the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham. Manufactures rollers, verticals, curtains and tracking mainly for its own use but also supplies a small number of trade customers.

Joined the BBSA as Terry feels it is a natural progression for the growth of the business and is important to have this accreditation and endorsement of the company's high standards.

New Blinds, Cheltenham 0844 335 1430

New Blinds moved into new premises earlier this year and supplies a full range of blinds and exterior shading. Owner Nicki Cook feels that joining the BBSA will help to build on the excellent reputation and increase her customer base. She has been in the blinds industry for thirteen years and run New Blinds for the last four and a half. Nicki has invested in a large showroom, which reflects her market that is almost all domestic sales with a small number of commercial customers.

New Blinds shares its premises with a window and glass company run by Nicki's partner so they complement each other very well.

BBSA AGM

10 Jun 2009



Pictures left to right

Mike Seary, BBSA Hon. Treasurer

Nelson Watt, presents the 'make it safe' campaign

Nigel Sharrock and Phil Ransome, introduce Showcase 2010

Peter Darragh of Chadwick Lawrence explains the new law on distance selling

Dave Morgan, BBSA President makes his address

BBSA Golf Days Confirmed

Can I first start by thanking Martin and Sue Fells for all the hard work that they have put in over the last 3 years as Captain and Captain's No 1. We have played some wonderful courses in some beautiful parts of the UK and I only hope I can keep up with the standards we are now used to. I thank them and look forward to seeing them both at the next BBSA Golf day.

This will be my first Golf day so I hope that you do not mind, but I have forfeited the spring (June) event so that we could do a Double Up Special Golf day in October. I felt that with the current economic climate all of us were more focused in getting our businesses heading in the right direction and would be prepared to wait for this two-day event at the end of the year. I do hope that I am right.
Martin Rayner

Date

Sunday 11th October & Monday 12th October 2009

Venue

St Pierre Golf & Country Club. Chepstow. S.Wales

2 Day Itinerary

Sunday 11th October 2009

Arrive & Check In / Coffee
18 Holes – Championship Old Course
3 Course Dinner & Presentations
Drinks in Bar.

Accommodation – Twin Rooms (single rooms are available at an extra cost)

Monday 12th October 2009

Breakfast, 18 Holes – Championship Mathern Course, Early Afternoon departure

Price £130.00 per Head.

Single room £158

I have tried to combine the very high standards that the BBSA Golf Society has been used to over the years, plus trying to keep the cost down to a minimum. To book or for further information contact myself or Tim Powell

martin.rayner@broadview-blinds.co.uk or tim@powellblinds.com

Martin mobile: 07801 297228

Check out the St.Pierre Web Site for more Course and Hotel details

www.marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/cwlgst-pierre-a-marriott-hotel-and-country-club

Exhibitions

100% Design

Earls Court, London
24 to 27 September 2009
www.100percentdesign.co.uk

Decorex 09

Royal Hospital, Chelsea
27 to 30 September 2009
www.decorex.com

T&T 2009

Rimini, Italy
7 to 10 October 2009
www.tendeetecnica.it

Dates for the Autumn/ Winter regional meetings

Scotland, 1st September

venue to be announced

Midlands, 21st October

venue to be announced

South East & London, 28th October

Princes Park FC. Dartford

Northern, 4th November

venue to be announced

South West, 9th December

venue to be announced