

'Do you know how much is in your bucket?'

Richard Harris, marketing manager at F Ball and Co,



asks if many flooring contractors know the difference between 15 litres and 15 kilos and which is better value:

OVER the past few years we have noticed that some manufacturers of flooring adhesives have chosen to package their products by weight (i.e. kilos), rather than the standard UK measurement (litres).

While there is nothing wrong with this, especially for those manufacturers who are based in other countries or who are subsidiaries of overseas businesses, there is a serious danger that flooring contractors may be inadvertently misled by this practice.

We have traditionally packaged our textile and resilient adhesives in 15 litre buckets on the logical basis that adhesive is applied by volume, not by weight.

The introduction by some manufacturers of adhesive packaged in 15kg containers presents contractors with a 'choice' that can

'15 kilos is not the same as 15 litres'

be deceptive. Visually, the buckets don't appear to be too different in size, but there is a very stark difference. It is fair to point out that 15kg of adhesive may not be the same as 15 litres of adhesive, it can be significantly less, and consequently, contractors can lose out.

■ **Same price, less adhesive:** Selling containers of adhesive in kilos can give contractors the wrong impression, as they may believe they are getting the correct amount of adhesive they require for an installation.

Flooring contractors will find that 15kg of product will generally cover less surface area than 15 litres of product, based on differing densities.

For example, our Styccobond F3 adhesive, when sold in a 15 litre container amounts to 17.85kg of adhesive, which is nearly 20% more than you would receive when buying a 15kg bucket. If the two container sizes (litres and kilos) are being sold at virtually the same price, as is often the case, you will get significantly less for your money

if you buy in kilos.

Those of a more cynical nature could be forgiven for believing that manufacturers who sell their adhesives in 15kg containers could be deliberately doing so to confuse the contractor.

■ **Trowel sizes:** Some manufacturers recommend the use of trowel sizes, such as an A2 trowel. However, these trowels, which have small notch sizes, are not entirely appropriate for use with all floorcoverings, such as carpet or linoleum.

We recommend using a trowel with a notch size of 2mm x 6mm. The use of a trowel with a smaller notch size can mean that, although the adhesive will cover a greater area, it will be spread more thinly over the subfloor.

Comprehensive testing carried out by F Ball confirms that, depending on the type of floorcovering, the use of an A2 trowel (and notch size) doesn't always allow for the application of enough adhesive to maintain an adequate bond throughout the life of the installation, potentially

leading to a failure.

■ **Meticulous testing:** In developing our annual Recommended Adhesives Guide (RAG), which is endorsed by leading floorcovering manufacturers, we undertake an unrivalled level of testing of adhesives on every available type and make of floorcovering.

This allows us to make an informed recommendation on the use of specific adhesives for particular floorcoverings and environments, enabling flooring contractors to rely on our products for every installation.

Part of the testing and the recommendations themselves are based on using the correct amount of adhesive to deliver a reliable bond, which is guaranteed throughout the lifetime of the installation.

With first class customer service and on-hand comprehensive technical support, we understand the importance of delivering value for money and proven product quality, so don't let yourself get sold short. **CFJ T: 01538 361 633**

www.f-ball.co.uk

'Fake HSE test endangers safety!'



Andrew Stewart, of Slip-Alert re-joins the debate on measuring slip risks and asks whether HSE is 'outside the law'?:

ROUGHNESS as a method of measuring and monitoring slip risk is not just an academic debate; the practice of monitoring slip risk with a roughness meter endangers the safety of ordinary people every day.

The HSE proudly proclaims that its anti-slip campaigns reach nearly 1m people... and those people make decisions on floor safety that affect you, your friends and your family, everyone in the UK, and increasingly people around the globe.

In the UK, slips cause one third of all serious injuries because floors tested for roughness and declared safe have a good chance of being unsafe.



There are laws against deliberately misleading claims...

www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/web/slips01.pdf states, 'An indication of slipperiness in water-contaminated conditions may be simply obtained by measuring the surface roughness of flooring materials.'

And the HSE STEP website states: 'Surface micro roughness data can provide

an indication of the slip resistance of a floor when contaminated.'

Who would guess from these statements that roughness measures can only be taken on clean dry surfaces?

The Slips01 publication (see link above) states, 'Roughness measurements may also be used to monitor changes in floor surface characteristics, such as wear.'

Yet there is no correlation between change to slip resistance caused by wear and the corresponding change to Rz roughness. These types of claims are normally illegal.

A bullying dictator... surely not in the UK

We are lucky enough to live in a country where you would not expect bullying or intimidation from government agencies. However, HSE has made it very clear, verbally and in writing, that they will not work with SlipAlert if we continue to disagree with their policy on roughness.

Our business should not feel pressured to support the use of a fake slip test that doesn't work, displaces real slip testing, and is putting

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Simon James, Polyflor marketing manager, asks whether the time is right for a Twitter campaign for flooring contractors:



THE digital age is well and truly upon us and I would be surprised if anyone said that they got through a normal working day without logging onto the internet or hearing a mention of Twitter or one of the many social media sites that seem to be an integral part of our daily existence now.

Here's an example of just how widespread it has all become. According to Facebook's own statistics (at the time of writing this), it has over 500m active users and over 700bn minutes are spent on the site every month.

A major contributory factor to this enormous figure is the ability for you and I to surf the net on the move, not just when sat at our desktop in the office or at home. Facebook goes on to quote that there 200m active users who access the site through mobile devices.

I know that Facebook is an internet behemoth and these figures are at the top end of the

spectrum, but I don't think anybody needs further proof of the massive impact the internet and digital world has had on how we live our lives.

Of course, this has all had a massive impact on the way we carry out marketing campaigns. For our sector, I would be the first to point out that we are not going to reach the majority of flooring contractors with a Twitter campaign or posts on our Facebook page.

We must realise, however, that flooring contractors, architects and specifiers are among the new digitally savvy population engaging in online forum debate and uploading their LinkedIn profiles – be it from their desktops or handheld devices. This is only going to grow and we are allocating resource to this stream of marketing.

Communicating our brand proposition and product USPs online has never been more important. But I think everything you do digitally must be supplemented by what has been the most important online marketing tool for the best part of two decades – a good company website.

If your website is attractive, easy to navigate and pages are populated with the most relevant and useful information, then you're off to a good start. At Polyflor we have invested heavily in the website, not

only in the look and design, but also its visibility when it comes to searches – in other words Search Engine Optimisation.

Naturally this can be a technical subject which takes into account text, links, page titles and alt tags on images, to name but a few, but this is all part and parcel of making sure your products are featured online.

The feedback we get about the Polyflor website has been positive and it remains the most comprehensive source of information about our products for our flooring contractor customers in the UK and around the world. The beauty about websites is that you can monitor traffic and how long people spend on your site so it is fairly easy to gauge its effectiveness.

When it comes to developing the other digital marketing tools on offer, the flooring industry might not be as mature as the world of celebrity, fashion or motoring where the audiences are far larger and more mainstream.

I think we can all be certain that this will steadily increase as we move forward. Polyflor too is gradually journeying into the whole social media marketing world with Facebook groups and blog posts and it is likely we will research and invest more time and resource into those channels that we perceive deliver tangible marketing results.

The print media has been firmly

impacted by the online revolution and there are a number of trade magazines that have folded under pressure to secure a portion of the 'modern' marketing budget.

I am in no way sounding the death knell for trade publications – quite the opposite really. I think the current marketing climate gives quality titles like the **CFJ** (no, Alan Bakalor did not put me up to this!) which has a loyal following and still offers a valuable route to market, the chance to excel.

You only need to flick through this magazine and see the ads and editorial from other leading brands to see just how alive and well a reputable publication can be. And while the digital age has been embraced by many of our customers, there are still a substantial number of them that no doubt prefer to pick up and read a hard copy over scrolling down a page on their Blackberry and having to zoom in to read the text.

Is the contract flooring industry ready for a full on social media marketing onslaught? Probably not, but as long as you have a good website you can still enjoy a favourable online presence. On the flip side of the coin, marketing teams in this sector, and most others for that matter, who don't appreciate the value and potential of digital marketing stand a real chance of being left behind. **CFJ**

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us out of business.

Roughness would be funny if it wasn't hurting people

In the Goon show, Eccles writes down the time on a piece of paper. He can tell people when it is eight o'clock because he has the time written on a piece of paper. According to the HSE, roughness measures taken on a clean dry floor 'may' tell you the wet slip resistance of that floor that is, if the floor is not contaminated, not too rough, not too smooth, has not been treated with anti-slip coatings etc, etc, etc.

In reality a roughness reading between 10 and 20 has only a one in three chance of matching the correct slip risk category. That is exactly the same chance as a pure guess.

For thousands of real people who have suffered serious injuries, the foolishness of roughness is not funny. For more misleading claims about roughness see the website:

www.ukstrg.co.uk

UKSRG and HSE mutual support and a circular argument

HSE claims its policies on roughness have support from the 'independent' UK Slip Resistance Group. In practice, the UKSRG is chaired by the HSE, is a protected group, and won't allow full membership to anyone who disagrees with HSE policy. Members include HSE staff, former HSE staff, and several businesses that profit from roughness.

International members regularly voice concerns about roughness but UKSRG members (those eligible to vote) supported a statement that roughness 'can' be useful, in the same way that Eccles 'can' tell you the time if you are lucky enough to ask him at eight o'clock.

Roughness on a wet/contaminated floor is particularly silly

In the small print on the HSE website you will discover that roughness measures should only be taken on clean dry floors, not on floors that are too rough, too profiled or have been treated

with anti-slip. Yet thousands of people believe HSE advice, don't read or appreciate the small print, and so monitor slip risk on floors assuming they are monitoring the changing slip risk.

Swimming pools use roughness, factories use roughness. Environmental Health Officers are encouraged by the HSE to monitor slip risk on kitchen floors using roughness.

We challenge roughness supporters to justify an HSE policy that misleads people into using roughness on floors where it won't give any more meaningful measure than telling the time by reading from a piece of paper.

Thousands of people use roughness to monitor the floors that you walk on every day.

That's not funny.

■ We live in the 21st century. **CFJ** readers can make a difference. If you object to roughness, object to HSE misleading people, object to the HSE being immune from UK trading laws, please contact me at: andrew@slipalert.com **CFJ**