

A SEASONAL REMINDER

Summer's all but gone - some say it never really arrived anyway so what the heck! But one way or another it's getting autumnal; that dewy sheen on the car in the morning, the moisture obscuring rear screen and door mirrors.

It's time to look forward to winter – not in heavenly anticipation maybe, but in terms of what it may bring to your business. Some abstract thoughts in an abstract order...

1. Falling leaves can block your drains and soak-aways – failing to deal with them could lead to flooding by valley gutters getting clogged and your roof leaking or drains becoming congested and water flowing where you don't want it to go!
2. Stock up now on grit salt against the likelihood of a winter like the last one – get in first for lower prices and plentiful supplies. Maybe take a gamble and order in a job lot that you can sell on to customers?
3. Start a PR campaign in your local press on winter readiness for vehicles – do you do pre winter checkups? If not can you? Could it increase your retail and off sales? Use the VBRA PR guide to make this happen
4. Start PR and advertising for winter damage – how to avoid problems but when the crunch comes here we are...?
5. Winter usually means more potholes. More potholes mean greater likelihood of messed up wheel alignment – do you do it? Should you do it? If you do how do your prospective customers know, can you offer it as a service and why should they use it. Offer it to garages without their own? If you're PAS and you offer it as a subcontract service you'll instantly fit their PAS125 -2011 clause 4.7 requirements (go on check them.); tell them about it!
6. Winter weather is worse than summer (usually..) so check your insurance cover is up to date. Check out the VBRA scheme policy for savings and improved cover
7. Get 'back to basics' with your advertising and promotion ahead of increased claims frequency. Use the VBRA 'Crash' poster
8. Build customer confidence by proactively using your Customer Satisfaction survey results
9. Got a business plan? Many do not have one. Darker nights mean greater opportunity to stay in the warm and plan for the future
10. If you're a Body Builder where are you at with Type Approval? Time is creeping on and your in scope dates are getting closer. Act now!
11. Make a light box to ward off SAD (look it up)? Maybe you don't need one and are equally effervescent winter and summer!
12. Kit the staff out in appropriate work clothing – try VBRA's suppliers for a good deal
13. If you've any back copies of BODY you've not got around to reading do it now – it'll brighten up the more dismal days to come. Get staff to read them to bring an added dimension to their work
14. Sort out any errant staff in terms of holidays due but not taken – you don't want them all to 'catch up' in one go and leave you short handed
15. Review the training needs for general business requirements to keep on top of current competency especially if you're PAS or Kitemarked and don't want to fail audit
16. Start thinking about presents for family and friends – no last minute stuff if you can avoid it
17. Organise a staff bash for Christmas if you're that way inclined and profitable and generous enough to do it
18. Get a wall planner for next year now if you haven't already
19. Ask yourself as this year draws to a close – “what did I do right and can i do it again” and “what did I do wrong and how can I avoid doing it again in future”?
20. Don't even think about making yet another New Year resolution you know you'll never keep. On the other hand if you acted on no 9 some resolutions to make it happen would be a very good thing
21. Freshen up your signage – look good – including your VBRA/OFT and Eurogarant badges
22. Smile (about something); it'll make you and everyone else feel better, regardless

With best wishes,

Malcolm Tagg
VBRA Director General

