

Shadow Construction Minister condemns h&s cuts

Government plans to halve the number of health & safety regulations and make it easier for companies to challenge Health & Safety Executive rulings – plans which have been welcomed by the Stone Federation (see last month's NSS) – have been attacked by Ian Wright, Labour's Shadow Construction Minister.

Speaking to *Building* magazine, the Shadow Minister said: "He [Prime Minister David Cameron] should concentrate less on peddling myths and look instead at the facts.

"Effective health & safety in the construction industry is not petty or a burden on business. Sensible health & safety in construction keeps people safe, reduces staff absenteeism and

helps improve productivity.

"It is a concern that 50 construction workers were killed in 2010/11. The prime minister needs to concentrate on reducing those fatalities and injuries."

Meanwhile, the Government

plans are going ahead. A new 'Challenge Panel' has been introduced this month that allows companies to challenge Health & Safety Executive (HSE) rulings and notices (such as prohibition notices that stop all activities and improvement

notices that require changes to be made). You can make initial contact with the Panel via the HSE website (www.hse.gov.uk).

The HSE has been told by the Government that its budget must be cut by 35% over two years. To compensate, it is introducing charges of £133 an hour for its 'support' from April if it finds any faults in workshops, factories or on-site.

And there could be even more loosening of health & safety regulations proposed when the Red Tape Challenge reports, which it is expected to do shortly. The Red Tape Challenge is a Government initiative that offers companies and individuals the opportunity to have their say on the regulations that affect our everyday lives.

Obituary: Sylvia Cornwall

Sylvia Cornwall died just before Christmas after a short illness. Sylvia started her career in the monumental industry in the 1960s working for her family retail business in Shropshire and Cheshire. She was the third generation of her family involved in the stonemasonry trade.

Many will remember Sylvia from her time in the wholesale side of the business, working for Odgings, John Fyfe and Mourn Granite, becoming dear friends and colleagues with many along the way.

Latterly, Sylvia and her son, Daniel, had established their own granite wholesale business, S & D Cornwall in Suffolk, which traded for more than a decade before going into liquidation in 2009.

The funeral service was held at Hopton Parish Church in Suffolk on Monday 16 January, followed by interment in Hopton Cemetery.

Marketing

Alan Gayle is a sales and marketing consultant specialising in the construction industry. In this column he offers advice on how to make an impact in the market. This time he looks at the value of case studies.

At the end of last month's article about the commercial value associated with removing risk I asked a question: "How do you convey confidence in your company over your competitors?"

For such a short and innocuous question, it has a very long and complicated answer.

In truth, the answer depends on the type of business. It is different for suppliers, contractors and consultants. To further complicate things it also depends on your target market. Do you sell to (or through) specifiers, main contractors, local authorities, private consumers, sub-contractors, local tradesmen or professional clients? Or perhaps a combination of some of these?

A good understanding of your target market's motivations and decision-making processes is key to deciding how to instil confidence in them.

Although we have a wide variety of different businesses in the construction industry, there is one, almost magical piece of marketing collateral. It is worth its weight in gold: The humble case study.

Marketing collateral, by the way, is anything which has been produced to promote the company or its products/services, such as company brochures, technical data sheets, websites, even samples.

Whether you're a one-man-band, a small firm or a multi-million pound main contractor, case studies are essential, especially in an industry which hasn't exactly got the highest credibility rating with its customers.

Don't underestimate the value of a good case study to give your potential customers confidence in your ability to deliver whatever it is you say you will deliver.

Why does it work?

All your other marketing collateral is full of self-serving statements to which any potential client could respond: "Well they would say that, wouldn't they?"

But, if a case study is written and presented properly, it can be what we used to call a 'third-party reference' – in plain English, an endorsement of your abilities and competence from someone else.

If the third party is particularly well known or in the same

business as the potential customer reading the case study, bingo! Instant credibility. It can go a long way to reducing scepticism and instilling confidence.

As with most things in marketing, it's easy to create a mediocre case study but it takes a bit more thought and a lot more effort to create a really good one.

There are lots of tricks to enhance case studies. The following checklist isn't definitive, but it can help. Hopefully it will be a good starting point, or help you if you want to review what you're currently doing.

The main points of a case study:

- Always write in the third person
- Always use high quality photography
- Always get someone else to check it
- Include quotes from a customer saying how good your contribution was
- Include your corporate branding
- Keep creating new case studies to keep your portfolio up to date

I'll leave you with a quote I agree



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with an article called 'The Power of Case Studies', which was written by Kirstie Colledge, MD of Simply Marcomms PR (an online PR agency) that was published in *Construction News*. It reads: "Case studies are extremely cost-effective – you can write a detailed case study and use it online via website, blog and PR campaigns. The same content can be used in a brochure or in a tender, bid or PQQ. A single, well written case study can be repurposed in dozens of different ways."