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The best 10 years so far ...



Colin St John, our General Manager, celebrates 10 years with Freefoam Plastics UK Limited this summer, so we took the opportunity to have a chat about his time at the company, and find out a little more about what makes the quiet man of Freefoam tick. This is actually a shortened version because those of you who know him will have also realised that once you do get him talking he's never lost for words!

So tell us a bit about your background before the Freefoam years.

In terms of relevant experience my first Management role was at Laing Retirements Homes as a Customer Care Manager dealing with homeowners and tenants as their properties passed from snagging through the defects periods to final handover. From here I enjoyed 12 years at Marshall Tufflex Windows progressing from managing replacement window installations, aftersales support, direct sales and then Customer Service & logistics. The first 10 years were very public facing and helped forge my passion for delivering excellent Customer Service.

And then came the opportunity to be at the heart of the Freefoam UK Operation.

How has your customer service background influenced Freefoam?

I believe it's been at the heart of all that we've achieved over the last 10 years. It was

especially encouraging to find Senior Management support for, and belief in, a 'can-do' ethos. We have excellent products, we've been continually innovative, and we've competed on all fronts with our competitors. I believe through it all that no-one, but no-one, has been as easy to deal with as Freefoam Plastics. It's that commitment to challenge every process in the quest of meeting a customer's need, which runs right through the company, that has kept us improving as a business, as an operation, and as a team.

So what was your vision for the UK operation 10 years ago?

Apart from 'improve and grow', both for the business and me personally, I didn't have one. I do visualise how my perfect Freefoam would look but that's more about a journey than a destination. I actually did have a turnover target in mind for the 10th year which we'll either just hit, or just miss this year, so fingers crossed.

What have been the products that have made the most significant contribution to Freefoam's success?

I'd have to say the Freeflow Rainwater system and the Colormax™ technology along with market leading guarantees. To be honest it's as much about people as products, there have been past and present, both inside and outside of the Company people that made significant impacts on our business. Having said that, there are a couple of products coming down the pipeline that really excite me. I believe they'll influence the shape of Freefoam going forward.

Freefoam has recently developed its marketing and support for registered installers. Is this part of an overall strategy?

We've always been the product of choice for the trade counter and installers. Our strategy has been to bring added value to that supply chain by making it easier for our customers to win business. These latest developments are part of that ongoing strategy and in response to our customers needs.

What do you see as the main challenges for the business over the next 2-3 years?

To be honest, I view our challenges over the next two years as being challenges for the whole industry. We need to work together to create value for our products and services in our customers eyes. We've repeated the mistakes made by the window guys; we've allowed our products to be sold too cheaply. Yes

(continued on page 2)

Even more support for Freefoam installers

Over the last few months we have been putting a lot of time and effort into improving the facilities and help we offer our Registered Installers. We really value our installers and the contribution they make to the success of our business and want to make sure they have the tools and sales materials to help them make a success of their business too.

New logo

We now have a new logo for all



Registered Installers and will be rolling this out onto literature and sales materials over the next few months.

New look and new name for the Guarantee part of our website

We have recently re branded the guarantee part of our website to **my freefoam**.

It's now a dedicated area for all stockists,



installers and homeowners. As well as a being able to do all the usual things like registering installations we have added some new features for installers to make things quicker and easier.

- Edit guarantees after you've created them.
- A new graph to show the number of installations you have registered
- Order marketing materials on line. Click on the Request Merchandise button and order a range of literature to help you promote your business and pitch for orders.

New materials

We have also added a few new additions to the range we offer including van stickers and a printed certificate to show that you are a Freefoam Registered Installer.

Get qualified

Being able to show customers you are a fully qualified installer gives them confidence



in you and your work - and it's another way you can differentiate yourself from others in the trade helping you win more business. Freefoam are currently running a pilot scheme in conjunction with well respected educational providers The Fenestration College allowing roofline installers to be awarded with a specific NVQ in roofline installation. We are hoping to widen the scope of this project so look out for more details over the coming months.

These changes are part of an ongoing programme of support for installers. We will continue to keep you updated with regular emails and letters on future developments.

Ten years at Freefoam (continued from page 1)

we've all had a part in creating that situation, in fairness, all in the belief we were doing what we needed to do to survive the last 4 years. From now on, we need to present the sustainable high performance credentials of PVC products along with the long term benefits to our customers and acknowledge the improved solutions we are all achieving year after year.

Having said that, we should not shy away from discussing, or highlighting matters that cause us concern. For instance, I feel very strongly about the growth of manufacturers 'own' distribution within our Industry. I'm not saying it's wrong, in fact I can see the advantages of such a strategy. Yes, we could be threatened by this development but my concerns are for the stockists, who face the very real threat of their supplier competing directly with them, it just seems alien to me and I would question who it serves. But as a result of these developments there are now only two independent manufacturers in the UK market. Which, to me, is cool.

Looking further ahead, there are opportunities like the Green Deal in 2012, and building regulations tightening the requirements in 2013 for energy efficiency. These will create massive challenges but equally big opportunities. To make the best of those opportunities we will all need to be working closely together to improve the whole supply chain. We'll need more training and better POS to sell effectively. And longer life guarantees will become critical.

What about future developments in the roofline industry generally?

I saw a comment recently attributed to John Carter, Chief Operating Officer of Travis Perkins. He talked about being customer focused: "we've got to be customer-centric". I'd agree that's becoming more and more important. We've got to adjust our focus beyond our immediate customer to our end

user in order to help them sell more effectively and deliver meaningful solutions that enrich everyone in the supply chain.

It's something we've always done, and something we'll be doing more of and better in the future.

I believe our customers' customer will be king in the future.

First job

Apprentice Electrician

Most useful/favorite gadget

I'm not into gadgets but I'd have to say I love using anything Apple at the moment

Favourite website

www.mcfc.co.uk

Come Dine with me guests

Michael Parkinson, Alex Ferguson, Billy Connolly and finally Gary Neville so I can ask him the secret for making the most out of a mediocre talent.

Biggest Influencers in your life

My Grandad, and the University of Life.

Advice for surviving the recession

Focus, keep an open mind, and be quick to react to change.

Favourite Restaurant

None, I hate the pretentiousness of restaurants these days, give me good pub grub any day.

Favourite TV

Last of the Summer Wine

Interests

People, I love people.

Favourite place

Home, in my own space.

And finally, if they made a film of your life, who would you choose to play you?

Harrison Ford, or Kevin Costner because most of the roles they play reflect the values that are core to me.

And they are

Ok, they would be honesty, integrity and most of all trust.

Leofric and Highline

Leofric Buildings design, manufacture and install an extensive range of pre-cast concrete garages, storage units and large steel portal-framed buildings.

Following demand from customers for easier maintenance and colour matching to existing buildings Leofric needed to look for an alternative to the existing timber fascia. They were introduced to the Freefoam range by Sefa Memetovic, Director, Highline Building Plastics. One of their main requirements was a deep flat woodgrain board that was foiled on the top and bottom. Paul Sheppard, Buyer, explained "Our single storey garages are often located very close to the adjacent property and the top of the fascia is visible from the house so we needed a product that had a neat finish top and bottom". Highline Building Plastics quickly identified that the Freefoam 'Tudor' board would be the ideal product with its 145mm width and all round foiling.

Paul went on to explain "We've been using Freefoam fascias for about three years and have been very pleased with the products. We



predominantly use the white and woodgrain products but the Freefoam range allows us the extra benefit of being able to specify colour where necessary giving us more market opportunities with a wider range of customers."

Highline Building Plastics have worked closely with Leofric to minimize stock commitments. In conjunction with Freefoam they have been able to provide a rapid response service on the woodgrain products often delivering within a 2 day turn round.

Sefa Memetovic summarised "Our work with Leofric is a good example of how we don't just sell products - we work with customers to create solutions. The flexible order schedules we get from Freefoam allows us to meet and often exceed customer expectations."

Summer of Support

Here at Freefoam it's not just about business. We like to take an active interest in our customers so this summer we've put our money where our mouth is and sponsored several customers in their endeavours to raise funds for a variety of deserving charities and good causes.



In May we joined Wholesale Plastics of Whitstable at Sittingbourne greyhound track. It was excitement all round when Riviera Roco stormed in first in the Freefoam Building Products Stakes - starting as an outsider at 5:1 in he came from behind to take the winning position. A great result for Simon Parrot, Area Sales Manager SE who backed the winner and a great result for Sittingbourne Retired Greyhound Trust who raised a total of £3,500 on the night.

July saw the streets of Paris busy with hundreds of cyclists. Nothing new there you might think but this wasn't the Tour de France but teams of keen amateur cyclists from the UK all raising funds for one of the country's leading UK childrens charities, Action Medical Research. Freefoam



sponsored Birkenhead Roofing & Ellesmere Port Timber who entered a six man team to take part in the 300 mile event cycling from London to Paris over 4 days. Martin Pilgrim, Director commented "Not only was this event very physically demanding but also very tough mentally, spending that long on the bike gives you too much time to think about how much it hurts!" The team has helped towards raising a staggering £634,000 - it seems that in these dire financial times people still care enough to give up some hard earned cash.

And finally Freefoam customers SIG Roofing and Roofline once again entered a formidable team into this year's London Triathlon. It was the fifth time the company had entered, with a variety of contractors, manufacturers, trade association members and distributors from the roofing and roofline industry taking part. Congratulations must go to The Roofing Racers who took part in what is a grueling and challenging event. The team put in a fantastic effort and are well on their way to reaching this year's record breaking target of £100,000.



"...in these dire financial times people still care enough to give up some hard earned cash"

Martin Pilgrim,
Birkenhead Roofing
& Ellesmere Port
Timber

Cladding Update

Following the introduction of more promotional materials and literature we are seeing a steady growth in the Fortex cladding range. In response to customer feedback we have now focused on two main profiles, the double plank, FCD300E and the weatherboard, FCF170E. We have had very positive feedback from installers, specifiers and homeowners and will be using these products to maximize market opportunities for the Fortex range. The single plank profile will still be available as a special order item giving customers further flexibility in their choice of cladding.



Trimco, new DGCOS member

Freefoam customer Trimco UPVC in Yeovil have recently become members of the Double Glazing and Conservatory Ombudsman Scheme (DGCOS) members. We spoke to Mark Donovan, Managing Director to find out more.

"We first heard about DGCOS from a flyer and were a bit sceptical, but having spoken to Freefoam we thought it was something we should look in to. We've joined so that we can offer our customers total peace of mind. We're already a well respected local company with a reputation for a good standard of work but being a member of DGCOS helps show our real commitment to doing a great job. And its not just anyone who can join. They did numerous checks on our business and also took up independent references from our customers and suppliers. We've started getting a few leads direct from DGCOS and it certainly gives us the edge when talking to customers. All together its been a good move for us - being a member is a real testament to the way we run our business and definitely something to be proud of."

For more information on DGCOS go to www.dgc.org.uk or call 0845 053 8975



General Building Plastics generate 66 new Freefoam Registered Installers

General Building Plastics, based in Rugeley, West Midlands are a long established family business. With four branches they cover a wide area of the West and South Midlands supplying a full range of plastic building products to trade customers.

“We saw an immediate interest from our customers”

Always keen to offer customers extra benefits Wendy Hill, Managing Director, recognized that the Freefoam Registered Installer scheme would give her customers the tools to help them sell more Freefoam products and also help establish a loyal customer base. Wendy explains “Whilst we were aware of the Registered Installer scheme we hadn’t actively promoted it due in part to not really understanding the benefits ourselves and not having the materials to promote it”

Wendy worked with Freefoam UK Marketing Coordinator Louise Sanderson and Kevin Archer, Area Sales Manager, to develop a campaign to promote the scheme across all four branches. Freefoam provided promotional flyers to raise awareness of the scheme in branch and Registered Installer packs so that customers could see the literature and sales materials they would receive as a Registered Installer.

All branch managers were also briefed about the scheme so that they understood the ins and outs and were able to promote the benefits to customers. Paul Tooth, Branch Manager, Rugeley commented “Our customers like the Freefoam products anyway, and when we explained that they could offer the extended guarantee through the Registered Installer scheme

they could immediately see the added benefits.”

The campaign ran for 6 weeks with all branches quickly getting on board. Wendy explained “ We saw an immediate interest from our customers. Many were long established customers who had not realized the benefits of the scheme and were keen to get involved. They liked the pack of materials and the fact there was minimal paperwork involved as it was all on line”

The campaign proved to be a great success. In total 66 customers registered as new Freefoam installers. Guardian Windows of Tamworth won the free prize draw with Freefoam providing the products for a complete roofline installation and the Rugeley branch generated the largest number of new registrations with Paul Tooth receiving a well earned crate of lager from Freefoam.

If you are a Freefoam stockist and would like to run a similar campaign contact your Area Sales Manager.



left to right, Directors Alan Sutherland and Wendy Hill, Rugeley branch manager Paul Tooth

In the Pipeline

New products give you the opportunity to develop new business. Here’s an update on a couple of new additions to our range.

NEW Geopanel interior decorative panelling
Freefoam has launched two new Geo-panel® ranges of interior decorative panelling: the 1m wide ‘Geo-panel Wide’ range and the 250mm



wide ‘Ceiling & Wall Panel’ range. The unique ‘Geo-panel Wide’ range is perfect for bathroom shower applications making it quicker and easier to fit. Both style panels fit together with a waterproof tongue-and-groove joint to ensure quick and easy installation without the need for grouting, come with a number of trims to ensure a neat and professional installation and are available in ten beautiful designs and colours.

NEW Finials

New flat backed finial made from High Impact Polystyrene available in two sizes.



Chamfered at both sides with a decorative fluted design the ideal solution on traditional properties to create a simple quick decorative cap to the face of the bargeboard at the roof apex.

COMING SOON

‘Cast iron’ style rainwater system

We will soon be launching a cast iron style rainwater system to our Freeflow range giving you all the benefits of PVC with the traditional look and feel of cast iron at a considerable saving. Look out for more information over the coming months.

Irish Oak

As the Irish Oak woodgrain is becoming increasingly popular for window and door products we feel that now is the right time to introduce this attractive colour option to our range of woodgrain roofline products. More information will be available shortly.



Ask your Area Sales Manager for more information about any of these products or contact us on 01604 591110

The Green Deal - what's it all about?

You may have heard about the Green Deal - unfortunately it's got nothing to do with golf or poker! We like to keep our customers and installers well informed so here's the nuts and bolts.

The Background

Britain has some of the oldest building stock in Europe. Our draughty homes are poorly insulated, leaking heat and using up energy. As consumers, we pay a high price for inefficient housing - and so does the planet.

A quarter of the UK's carbon emissions come from the energy we use to heat our homes. The Green Deal is a government incentive that is scheduled to start in Autumn 2012 to allow homeowners up to £10,000 to make energy efficiency improvements to their homes at no upfront cost.

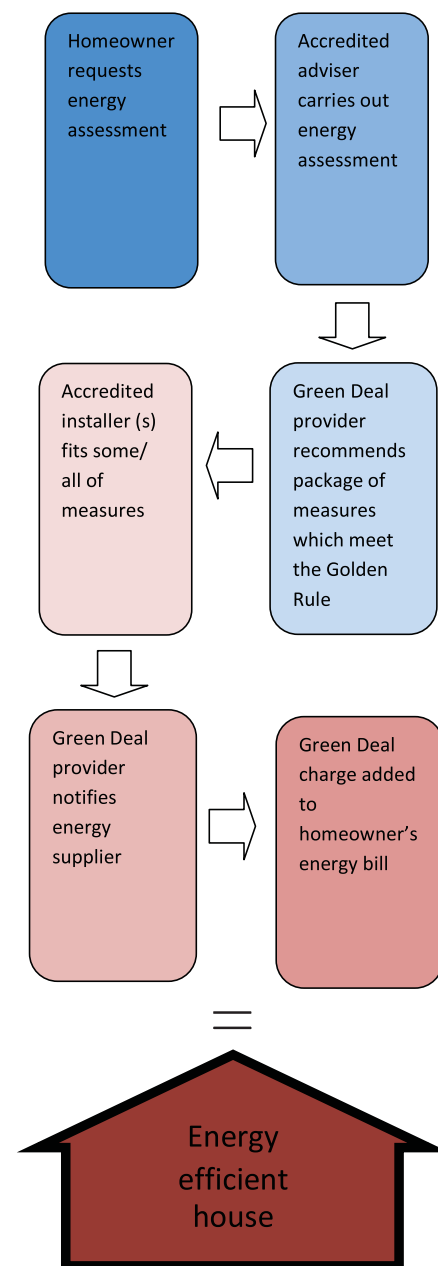
The installation costs will be financed through private companies and the payments will be recouped through the homeowner's energy bill. There are two distinct advantages to this. Firstly, unlike other loans, the debt will sit with the property and not the individual - meaning no defaults on the loan will be incurred. Secondly the consumer will cease paying when they leave the property, unlike personal loans, which borrowers have to keep on repaying even if they are no longer enjoying the benefits. The new owner takes over responsibility for the payments on the property.

Anyone can apply for the funds but the Golden Rule is that the expected financial savings on the energy bill MUST equal or outweigh the cost of the work.



So how will it work?

Here's a diagram to show how it will work for homeowners:



Timescale

The coalition government are committed to launching this scheme next year and have set out the following timetable to make sure it happens.

Pre-Autumn 2011 - Officials engage stakeholders as they develop the technical details for secondary legislation

Autumn 2011 - Formal consultation on secondary legislation

Early 2012 - Secondary legislation laid before Parliament

Autumn 2012 - Detailed industry guidance prepared. First Green Deals appear.

So what sort of things will the Green Deal pay for?

There are a whole range of measures that will qualify for the scheme, including condensing boilers, under floor heating, solar panels, wall, loft and floor insulation.

So what's in it for Freefoam stockists and installers?

Our cladding, including the innovative embossed Fortex range, provides the perfect solution for external insulation when installed with standard components. The Building Research Establishment's (BRE) Green Guide to Specification has given all PVC cladding an A+ rating when installed with standard insulation components. You might already be fitting or stocking this product but the introduction of the Green Deal may make it an even more attractive proposition giving you an extra opportunity to grow your business.

What next?

The terms and conditions around The Green Deal are still being finalised and as things become clearer we will keep you up to date with developments. For more information visit www.decc.co.uk.



“Our cladding, including the innovative wood embossed Fortex range, provides the perfect solution for external insulation.”

New corporate workwear for our sales team

In a tough, ever changing market place a 'uniform' approach sometimes needs a re-focus. The sales team at Freefoam were certainly set new targets when they took part in a paintballing event recently.

It was a fun, tough session and at times the team appeared to lose sight of who the real enemy was, or where they were coming from. Well that's how Richard Jackson, National Sales Manager, explained it in the de-brief.

A rather sore, black and blue Colin St John wasn't so convinced, but promised the next team get together would be at Specsavers.



Spot The Difference Prize Winner

Many thanks to all of you who sent in entries to our Spot the Difference competition in the last newsletter.

There are lots of observant people out there!

Congratulations to Ray Kemp of Piper Windows in Folkestone who won the shopping vouchers.



Simon Parrott, left, Ray Kemp, right

www.freefoam.com

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We are here to help



Stockists

We have an experienced customer service team to help with any enquiries.

Please contact us

Monday - Friday 8.30am - 5.30pm

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Installers

If you would like information about our products please contact your local stockist or Freefoam on 01604 591110