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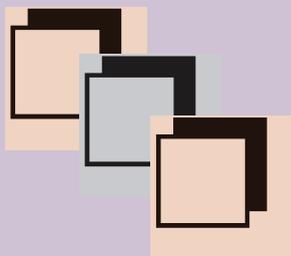
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# THE FABRICATOR

## Comment

Think of trade associations and you might imagine long established, often conservative organisations. Dickensian in their attitude, perhaps conservative and authoritarian. These organisations have a long history with origins in the trade guilds. Manufacturers and merchants have long seen the sense in joining forces to represent their particular industry and the interest of its traders by influencing government legislation and establishing or influencing standards. Inevitably, over the centuries, some associations have become businesses in their own right. Perhaps to the benefit of no one.

So it is refreshing, indeed welcome to see the launch of the Certass Trade Association (CTA), a brand new association for window installers.

This is a sector that is growing as, smaller fabricate and fit window companies relinquish manufacture, finding that they can buy more cost effectively from bigger fabricators. In addition homeowners are looking for a much wider range of products as aluminium becomes once again popular in the domestic market with more complex systems such as folding sliding doors in demand. With the builders merchants increasingly offering windows, installers, as well as consumers, have a wider choice of supplier.

Previously installers, as a sector, had no specific organisation to represent or advise them. Moreover they are often thought of as the 'man with a van' kind of operation. These days nothing could be further from the truth and there are some substantial companies dedicated to selling and fitting windows in both the commercial and retail sectors. They were encouraged – some say coerced – into joining competent persons schemes but these organisations are actually to do with self certification for building control and offer no representation or advice to members.

Starting from a competent persons scheme base CTA does, of course have a track record as far as installers are concerned. As a trade association it is now free to guide members through pitfalls, new legislation for example. It will also be in a position to represent members' interests in disputes. Something that is not possible for a competent persons scheme to do.

CTA approaches its foundation with a specific view of problems facing the industry: a lack of reliable support, an ageing workforce and poor perception from consumers. In addition to these pressures installers have to stay competitive and professional as the market changes rapidly. On top of that there is also a severe lack of skilled labour.

No one organisation can solve these problems. Lack of government will to support business, especially small and medium sized businesses, is a huge part of the problem. We, by now, all know Boris Johnson's opinion of us and I rather suspect that he speaks for a lot of his colleagues and certainly all of the Brexit lobby.

So unless things change in the next year Certass Trade Association – not to mention other organisations that reckon to represent the industry – could have their work cut out.

*John Roper*