

Small Business Trade Association Forum Minutes

Paper SBTAF/07/04

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Small Business Trade Association Forum

Minutes of the Meeting of the Small Business Trade Association Forum, held on 17th April 2007 in the Hope Room, Rose Court.

Present:

Judith Donovan CBE, Chairman
 Moira McMillan, British Coatings Federation
 Pete Walker, British Constructional Steelwork Association Ltd
 Leslie Hill, British Wood Preserving & Damp Proofing Association (representing the Property Care Association, the Wood Protection Association and the British Pest Control Association)
 Michael Lee, British Woodworking Federation
 Janet Asherson, Confederation of British Industry
 Paul Reeve, Electrical Contractors' Association
 Peter O'Connell, Federation of Master Builders
 Tim Kind, Forum of Private Business
 Wendy Nixon, Hair and Beauty Industry Association
 Pat Stanley, National Farmers' Union
 Ray Seymour and Eileen Lawson, National Hairdressers Federation
 Matthew Cowan, Professional Contractors Group
 Collette Best, Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
 Tony Hutchinson, Rural and Industrial Design and Building Association
 John Morecroft, Vehicle Builders and Repairers Association

Apologies:

Philip Clarke, British Association of Chemical Specialities
 Kieran O'Keefe, British Chambers of Commerce
 Annabel Berdy, British Retail Consortium
 Daniel McAlonan, British Dental Association
 Declan Moore, British Glass Manufacturers' Confederation
 Bob Cotton, British Hospitality Association
 Robert Keen, British International Freight Association
 Peter Newport, Chemical Business Association
 Andrew Braund, Confederation of Paper Industries
 Shelley Atkinson Frost, Construction Confederation
 Haydn Steele, Construction Plant Hire Association
 Louise Ward, Engineering Employers Federation
 Angela Hills, Federation of Tour Operators
 Rosina Robson, Federation of Small Business
 Bob Towse, Heating and Ventilating Contractors' Association
 Geraint Day, Institute of Directors
 Robert Hudson, National Association of Shopfitters
 John Gillland, National Care Homes Association
 Howard Button, National Federation of Demolition Contractors
 Catherine Tong, National Federation of Retail Newsagents
 Mervyn Pillely, National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors
 Martin Isles, Quarry Products Association
 Mike Floodgate, Radio, Electrical and Television Repairers' Association
 Frank Ursell, Registered Nursing Home Association
 Ruth Pott, Road Haulage Association
 John Brazier, PICON

Garry Parker, Small Business Bureau
 Jean Rennie, Timber Trade Federation

Officials Present:

Jenny Eastbrook (Head Cross Cutting Interventions Division)
 Colin Douglas (Communications Directorate)
 Shelagh Molloy (Communications Directorate)
 Stuart Bristow (Worker Involvement Unit)
 Laurence Golob (Business Involvement Unit)

Heather Butler – SBTAF Secretariat
 Debra MacLeod – SBTAF Secretariat
 Zoe Woodrow - SBTAF Secretariat
 David Gregson - SBTAF Secretariat

1.	Introductions and apologies
1.1	Judith Donovan welcomed members to the meeting. Judith informed members that since the last meeting two new members have joined the Forum, Mervyn Pilley, National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors and John Brazier, PICON.
2.	Minutes of the last meeting
2.1	It was agreed that references to the online community discussion at the previous meeting needed to be amended to accurately reflect points made by forum members.
3	Update on SME information, advice and guidance project – the strategy
3.1	<p>Debra MacLeod, Business Involvement Unit, gave an update on an item presented at the October 2006 meeting on improving information, advice and guidance for SMEs.</p> <p>HSE is considering ways in which it currently communicates with small businesses and has grouped it into three types of engagement and identified ways in which this communication could be improved.</p> <p>Stage 1: General information - website and publications (priced and non-priced):</p> <p>We are undertaking a review of existing HSE publications to ensure that they meet the needs of the SME audience and will ensure that the small business angle is covered during the process of agreeing and developing new material – to ensure that there is a real need for the publication, and that the brief reflects the needs of small businesses. We have also drafted a piece of practical guidance for HSE staff who are involved in written communications to ensure that they really are making their material SME friendly. The Forum has been asked to provide feedback on this guidance</p> <p>In light of comments received from the Forum at the January meeting we are working closely with the HSE online team on the process of redeveloping the business pages of the HSE website, We are also working to make better use of other channels such as the businesslink.gov.uk website as a route in to business that wouldn't necessarily think of looking for health and safety information specifically, but who are looking for general business advice.</p> <p>Stage 2: Tailored information - interactive web tools, tailored email alerts and telephone information e.g. Infoline:</p> <p>We are considering the development of new internet material which will pull out key information for industries on hazards they face and are doing further work to improve the HSE e-bulletins. Work is being undertaken to provide supporting material to help SMEs who complete the SME performance indicator take action to address the issues raised by providing more detailed information on tackling hazards which are, again, tailored to the particular industry sector.</p> <p>Stage 3 Tailored advice – often face-to-face by inspectors and Health and Safety</p>

	<p>Awareness Officers, and telephone advice e.g. Workplace Health Connect:</p> <p>At Stage 3 it is particularly important that HSE ensure that it is focusing resources where they are most likely to be effective, to this end we are developing a segmentation strategy to support that. This will be used to have a better understanding of the target audience and offer products and services which meet their needs.</p>
3.3	<p>During discussions HSE recognised the important role trade associations as a key mechanism of reaching out to small business and the value they can add during the development of advice and guidance. The Forum confirmed it was happy to be consulted on relevant draft guidance. A member of the Forum made the specific point that HSE should use pictures more in it's guidance materials, as the target audience generally has a low reading age.</p> <p>There was recognition that for small businesses health and safety is not approached as a stand alone topic but is just one part of running a successful business. Several HSE officials agreed with this point and drew members attention to the businesslink website. The website provides HSE with an inroad to those businesses who may not immediately be looking for information on health and safety. It lays out information in a way that is relevant and helpful for business. It was raised during the discussion that it could be useful for HSE to increase its awareness of how many hits its website receives from SMEs.</p> <p>A lively discussion followed regarding the difficulties for HSE in drawing an effective demarcation between providing advice and the act of enforcement is a complicated balancing act for enforcement authorities. One member did note however that advice can work hand-in-hand with enforcement. The important role of using trade associations as a vehicle to help distribute advice and guidance was noted.</p> <p>Debra reassured the forum that LACORS are involved in the project and are represented on the steering group.</p> <p>Concerns were raised regarding whether expectations of what could be achieved through segmentation research were realistic. Colin Douglas explained that the HSE segmentation research is in the very early developmental stages. HSE is aware that it is difficult to segment audiences based on attitude and it is currently attempting to determine the practicability of pursuing this avenue.</p>
4	<p>Corporate publications review – discussion of draft guidance</p>
4.1	<p>Shelagh Molloy, Communications Directorate, explained the work that is underway to implement conclusions from a review of HSE Corporate publications: annual reports, the HSC/E newsletter and statistics publications had all been updated in the last 2 years. We were now improving generic explanatory and implementation publications. The review had shown that much of the information in them was duplicated across publications.</p> <p>Judith Donovan pointed out that the format might fall into the more expensive category under new postal pricing arrangements; Shelagh agreed to check the position. If trade associations were to help distribute it was important that they did not incur the higher rate.</p> <p>Focus group research had shown that information about how HSE as an organisation works is of limited relevance to most SME employers and this information will no longer be in leaflet form but included in the 'About Us' section of the website which is currently being re-developed</p> <p>HSE proposes a new introductory leaflet on health and safety entitled 'Health and Safety – Getting Started'. This leaflet will replace four existing publications, 'An introduction to health and safety,' 'Need help on health and safety?' and 'Managing health and safety: five steps to success.' The publication begins by explaining what is meant by health and safety and who health and safety regulations apply to. It continues to explain how to manage health and safety, including details on how to conduct a risk assessment. The leaflet then covers 5 key risks in greater detail. The potential risks that should be covered in the leaflet have been debated and the initial suggestion is to include lifting and handling, stress, slips, trips and falls, workplace transport</p>

	<p>and falls from height. The intention is to distribute the leaflet in starter pack / priced packs, HSAO / Inspector visits and through HSE Books. The leaflet has been tested on small firms owner/managers. Forum members agreed to take the leaflet away and feed back their opinions and suggestions.</p>
4.2	<p>Members noted that HSE's specific concerns are not necessarily shared by small businesses. There was general agreement amongst members that 'Stress' should not be included as it destroys the concept of risk. Small business priorities in terms of hazards are those which can kill or cause immediate harm to an employee. Electricity was suggested as a further potential hazard that could be included in the document as members felt that as it is a recognised hazard in the home its relevance would also transfer to the workplace. A member of the Forum commented that by picking out certain risks, could it be taken that the other risks are not important? Members commented that there should be an explanation regarding why specific risks have been chosen for inclusion, for example 'falls need attention because they can kill you.'</p> <p>A member of the Forum asked if micro-industries (firms with less than 12 employees) were included in the focus groups. Shelagh reported they had been included in one focus group. Focus groups had been asked to consider whether with removal of 'Introduction to Health and Safety' the new document would provide an adequate bridge to and the existing publication 'Essentials'. They had been satisfied that it provided sufficient information and that there was no need</p> <p>A discussion ensued regarding the language used in the document. It was pointed out that those people who are un-initiated in health and safety issues would be unaware of what a 'less risky option' may be. It was suggested that it may be useful to provide example potential alternatives.</p> <p>Members flagged up the need to address the question of whether considering the removal of 'Introduction to Health and Safety' would the new document and the existing publication 'Essentials' provide sufficient information that is specifically directed at small businesses with limited knowledge of health and safety.</p> <p>Since the SBTAf meeting comments made by members have been passed on to the team working on the corporate publications review.</p>
5	<p>Follow up on competency statement</p>
5.1	<p>Laurence Golob, Business Involvement Unit, updated members on the progress in developing guidance on employing 'fit for purpose' external health and safety advice from a 'competent' source. HSE is producing this guidance in partnership with IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health). The original draft was presented to the Forum in October 2006.</p> <p>In light of feedback received at the October meeting it was decided that the original statement was unlikely to prove very useful to SMEs, and suggested it would be better to provide SMEs with a shorter, sharper document in the form a series of questions they should ask themselves when considering obtaining external help. Following the Forum's comments the previous version has been replaced with a short series of questions as suggested. This piece of guidance is entitled 'Getting help with health and safety?'</p> <p>Following comments made at the October meeting regarding the importance of directly addressing the providers of help themselves concerning what is involved in making their service 'fit for purpose' for SMEs. Therefore in addition we have developed guidance addressed to the providers of external services which sets out what they need to do to provide a 'fit for purpose' service for SMEs. This paper is entitled 'HSE statement to the external providers of health and safety assistance.'</p>
5.2	<p>Members commented that the revised version was a significant improvement from the original statement. It was remarked that the detail in the statement directed at the providers of advice should be worded more strongly as difference between the provision of good or bad advice could have severe consequences. Members said that it would be useful to expand on the advice provided re informing clients how to check whether a consultant is reputable and knowledgeable. A suggestion was also put forward that it could be worth considering telling clients to contact</p>

	<p>trade associations for advice before contacting consultants.</p> <p>Questions were asked regarding how HSE intends to distribute the guidance. Laurence responded by saying that the intention was to do this via IOSH, the HSE website and potentially through Trade Associations. A further suggestion was put forward indicating that it would be important to distribute both pieces of advice together as it could be useful for clients to see both sides of the issue.</p>
6	Health and Safety Law poster
6.1	<p>Stuart Bristow, Worker Involvement Unit, spoke about the current HSE review of the health and safety law poster. This review has been instigated as part of the better regulation agenda in an effort to reduce the administrative burden placed upon businesses. The aim is to ensure that all employees have access to basic health and safety information without imposing unnecessary administrative burdens. Of particular concern is how any changes will affect for vulnerable groups because HSE recognises it is important that we ensure we reflect the diverse community we serve.</p> <p>The process of the project was explained to the Forum, including the need to research employees' awareness, understanding and opinions on the content and presentation of the poster. The team will present their results to the HSC in the summer 2007 and go out to consultation in autumn 2007.</p> <p>Members were asked to provide their opinions about the effectiveness of a poster and/or leaflet for providing information. Comments were welcomed regarding the specific content and layout of any alternative or revised version of the poster.</p>
6.2	<p>Several members commented that they believed that the health and safety law poster fulfilled no specific purpose. It was suggested that a suitable alternative to the poster would be to put the requirements into a policy document, the company's health and safety document or an employees handbook</p> <p>There was discussion of the sanctions that could be enforced for not displaying the health and safety law poster.</p>
7	Members' opportunity to raise 'hot' topics
	<p>Concerns were raised regarding the loss of human resource in HSE. Jenny Eastabrook confirmed a process of identifying priority areas of work in HSE would ensure that the key work of the organisation was adequately resourced.</p> <p>Further information was requested regarding how HSE ensures that micro and small businesses have adequate access to affordable occupational health. The secretariat made a commitment to investigate the issue.</p> <p>A discussion was held regarding the current internet campaign entitled 'myth busting' that is being run on the HSE website. The member wished to know what HSE was hoping to achieve through this campaign. The secretariat made a commitment to investigate the issue and provide a brief on it.</p>
8	AOB
8.1	<p>The Forums attention was drawn to RoSPA's National Occupational Safety and Health Committee which will be held in Birmingham on the 23rd May.</p> <p>Moira MacMillan, British Coatings Federation, a member of the SBTAF recently attended and spoke at the HSE Better Regulation Conference and informed members that she found this to have been a very worthwhile experience. Moira said that she was pleased to find that HSE and trade associations do share common objectives and to see that HSE genuinely do give</p>

	consideration to the effects of the work that they undertake. Moira recommended that any Forum member that may have the opportunity to attend and or speak at one of these events takes up the offer.
9	Meeting round up and close
9.1	The Chairman commented that this would be the last meeting of Debra MacLeod who is going on maternity leave.
10	Date of next meeting – 18th July 2007, 10:30 – 13:00 (Please note this is an AM meeting)
Actions	<p>Secretariat to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a brief on micro and small businesses access to affordable occupational health • Provide a brief for Forum members on the 'Myth buster campaign.' • Amend references to the online community discussion in the minutes of the January meeting to accurately reflect points made by forum members. • Provide members with details of the opportunity to input into HSE policy making seminars • Laurence Golob to get back to forum members with details of how they can promote the competency statement • Shelagh Molloy to confirm the position regarding postal pricing arrangements for the new publications. <p>Forum members to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feed back any further comments/suggestions you may have regarding the paper 'Communicating with SMEs - advice for HSE staff' (Agenda item 3) • feed back views regarding the suitability and usefulness of the new introductory leaflet on health and safety 'Health and safety - getting started.' (Agenda item 4) • forward any further comments on the revised competency statement. (Agenda item 5) • provide comments regarding the suggested alternative layouts for the health and safety law poster and to feed in any general suggestions regarding this subject (Agenda item 6)

To contact the Small Business Trade Association Forum Secretariat, please email sbtaf.secretariat@hse.gsi.gov.uk or telephone 020 7717 6319 or access the e-community at <http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/inovem/inovem.ti/sbtafcommunity/grouphome>