

FEATURE



SMOKE 'EM OUT

With the Smoking Ban coming into full effect on 1 July, we take a look at what dealer salespeople need to know to profit from the transition to office smokelessness.

For some, another piece of evidence in the dossier entitled 'nanny state'; for others evidence of sanity finally prevailing; either way come 1 July smoking will be banned from the English workplace.

No one is saying this is going to be a massive upheaval, with smokers running screaming from smoke-free buildings. As Dormy's marketing manager, Jill Graham points out, it's already been implemented in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales without too much fuss. However, she adds that businesses did appear to be under prepared for the new legislation.

"The subsequent bans earlier this year should have highlighted to companies across England what is required of them to comply with the law," says Graham. "However, as is often the case with new legislation, companies are prone to leaving any required action to the last minute."

An undeniable truth, and one backed up by Nigel Eaton, country manager UK & Ireland for Smead UK, who describes how many companies he's worked with are unaware of their exact obligations and at what level they need to act in order to bring themselves within the law.

"We at Smead have been quite attuned to the details but were shocked to realise that we are expected to display no smoking notices in our company cars," says Eaton.

In order to improve the level of awareness through the channel, all the companies contributing to this feature (Smead UK, Dormy and Spicers) report having spread literature and worked with dealers to educate their customers about the ban. If you missed the recent television campaign by the government, then your manufacturer and wholesaler contacts are a good place to start for information. Primarily, of course, so you can maximise your sales during this one-off opportunity. >>

What practical changes do companies need to make in order to comply with the Act?

The Health Act 2006 requires a company to display a no-smoking sign at each public entrance to the premises, which must be prominently visible to everyone entering the premises. The sign must:

- (i) *Be a flat, rectangular sign with minimum dimensions of 148 mm by 210 mm (A5)*
- (ii) *Display the international "no smoking" symbol*
- (iii) *State: 'No smoking. It is against the law to smoke in these premises'.*



What are companies obliged to do in order to comply with the ban?

It is the duty of every person who controls or who is concerned with the management of smoke-free premises to stop people from smoking there. Companies are therefore obliged to take reasonable steps to stop your employees or customers from smoking on your premises.

“Dealers are in a strong position to help their customers understand how to comply and what signage and facilities are available to support this,” says Spicers merchandising manager, Jeanette Bresitz. “Spicers has pulled together activity over the last six months to help inform dealers of the ranges available to them to help capitalise on this change in legislation.”

With this product and legislative knowledge in place, as Eaton points out, salespeople are then armed with a story to tell. This is an opportunity to sell a service to a customer who has a clearly defined need.

“While we specialise in bins I am sure our colleagues in signage are equally keen to highlight the requirements of the new law from that point of view,” adds Eaton. “This is both an upsell and indeed a cross-sell opportunity that will not be

repeated soon. The opportunity is therefore to be seen as a solution provider not a seller.”

You can even take it one step further and act as a full-on site inspector; white coat and hard hat optional. Bresitz recommends getting a good look of the premises that need to be equipped, and walk around with the customer to help them identify where signage and equipment could be placed to satisfy both the legislation and staff need.

And the products we’re talking about exactly are... what? The main areas to keep in mind are control of smoking waste, shelter and signage, says Eaton. “Smead can cater for the needs of both sheltered and open smoking areas with tailor made solutions. And we have, in conjunction with our channel partners, designed new products specifically to cater for this opportunity,” he adds.

Bresitz says that, in the main, a business will certainly need to display the correct legislative signage to comply with the ban.

“However there will be a big demand for outdoor ash bins large enough to cater for the number of staff/customers/visitors that a business has,” she says. “They’ll be in some cases the need for shelters, lighting perhaps, even security cameras depending on the area and the working hours of a particular business.”

Graham points out that there is little price perception regarding bespoke stamps and it’s one of the few products that a dealer can still sell at full retail price, providing, “exceptional profit margins”. “To enable businesses to cope with the new legislation, Dormy introduced the Trodat range of bespoke ultra violet self-inking stamps – created with ‘admittance control’ in mind – i.e. ideal for letting smokers in and out of bars and clubs when necessary – also a great solution for security at public events such as concerts/festivals.”

So, knowledge, both product and legislative, and solution selling is the best approach. Bresitz adds that we shouldn’t assume the consumer is fully clued up; work with them and help them understand their obligations and demonstrate what you can do to service these for them. And, as Eaton reminds us, if you don’t, then somebody else certainly will. ■

What will the consequences be if a company fails to comply with the Act?

Unless a company can show that it took reasonable steps to stop a person smoking on its premises, or it did not know and could not reasonably have been expected to know that they were smoking, it could be liable for a fine of £2,500. If a company fails to comply with the no smoking sign provisions it could also be liable to pay a further £200.