

March 2004

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Don't take my word for it

MOST OF US are well aware of the legislation that gave home occupiers the fundamental human right to security. Whether they be the purchasers of a brand new 5-bedroom luxury spec-built house or the tenants of an Inner Urban Area flat, they are all entitled to expect their homes to be secure - and demonstrably so. It's not enough any more to claim that a back door can resist a break-in attempt. You have to be able to prove it, whether you designed it, made it, installed it or specified it.

This is hardly a sideline issue, either. *Secured by Design* was the initiative that got a lot of top level support, followed by the introduction of criteria by which a door's performance could be measured. Those rules already existed, of course, in the form of British Standard specifications PAS 23 and 24.

There's something reassuringly British about the way we don't take a company's word for things, hence our reluctance to believe what we're told about genetically modified crops. We have to be seen to be doing things right, which means Third Party certification.

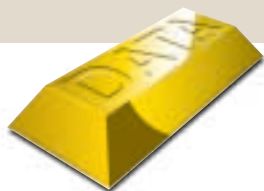
Nothing could be easier than writing in technical literature that a door has been tested to PAS 24, only it means



less than nothing. It doesn't even mean it passed the test! Part of *Secured by Design* requirements is that a door

can't be described as secure unless someone else has proven it to be so. Test after test, ticks in all the right boxes, and

continued on page 2...



Circulate this to...

1. _____
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Asbestos can burn you

THE RIBA can't issue an e-mail, these days, without referring to all the problems associated with asbestos.

Unless you only deal with new build, this means that almost every architect - and just as many surveyors - must be aware that extreme care has to be taken when dealing with the stuff. The Workplacelaw network has launched a special report - probably a snip at £100 - on the topic (go to www.workplacelaw.net/eshop/product_info) for more information.

The **Quality Index** website (www.thequalityindex.co.uk) is dedicated to ensuring that quality assured firms are easily found.



Architects and surveyors are shown and, as of now, so are all the various quality assured agencies that deal with asbestos, whether they be consultants or contractors. We're doing our bit, in other words.

If you're an architect or surveyor reading this, please note that details about your company appear on the website. They're as accurate as possible but your knowledge is bound to be better than ours. If there's anything wrong, or missing, please let us know. You can e-mail details, additions or corrections to martin@tqi.info and we'll put them straight onto the website. And, of course, you can tell likely clients that what makes your organisation a bit better than your colleagues (the opposition) is your presence with the rest of the elite in an easy-to-find directory.

Of more use to you, right now, might be the ability to access the website for assistance in drawing up your asbestos management plan. Guidance notes on how to get the best from specialist contractors are all very well but, as you know, the provision of quality assured services often relies on pulling other QA companies into your system. When it comes to having a Duty of Care, the easiest way in the world to deal with something as dangerous as asbestos is to show that you chose a quality assured partner to help you.

Sure, it's a hazardous substance - everyone knows that - but most professionals are equally aware of the threat that hangs over their professional indemnity insurance. The Names who underwrite Lloyds insurance must hardly get a wink of sleep. Not your problem . . . but it could be if someone misses a tiny detail, and a claim ensues. Suddenly, those words Duty of Care start to take a very ominous tone. Nothing demonstrates treating the matter professionally as much as choosing a quality assured partner. No need to get your fingers burnt, then.



The best way to...

MAKE CONTACT ISN'T ALWAYS BY THE DIRECT ROUTE.

Nothing wastes more time than direct-dialling phone numbers. If the person is out of the office, and there's no voice-mail, the phone just rings and rings. Without a switchboard number, you don't even know you dialled the right number, because nobody answered, and you certainly can't leave a message. Whilst you might think getting in touch direct is the easiest way, it ain't necessarily so. By using switchboard numbers only, it's actually more likely that it will be possible to talk to elusive people.

Don't take my word for it ...continued from page 1

there's a certificate to show that the door does exactly what it says on the tin.

So many homes come with PVC windows, complete with shootbolt locking mechanisms and a BS 7950 certificate, that we automatically expect those windows to keep intruders out, especially round the back of the house. In other words, there's no shortage of homes where the back door is actually less secure than the kitchen window. Secure back doors are Big Business, then.

Step One: ensure the door set comes with all the right credentials. **Step Two:** ensure it's correctly fitted. Whoa! Hang on a minute. We've got a £500 door, and we're leaving it to a couple of lads in a white van to fit? A door is not . . . NOT an

installation in someone's home. It's a product that gets shipped out of a factory. It comes with a certificate and then, all too often, we forget to ensure some fairly stringent specification clauses to cover what happens on site.

Less than 5%

Have you ever stopped to wonder why so many door and window installation companies come and go? There are thousands of them, stars this year that disappear next. Get in there, make your bundle, and either cease trading or change the name, when the claims start rolling in. Less than 5% of the industry has any form of Quality Assurance. And less than a third of them have regulated procedures to ensure that what happens on site comes up to

scratch. Talk about taking risks! Who's taking the risks, though? Is it the companies who have to win the work in competition? They hope that today's profits aren't going to be swallowed up by tomorrow's liabilities. Is it the specifier who takes a rather sloppy attitude to Duty of Care (also hoping that today's cashflow isn't next year's insurance claim)?

So maybe it's worth checking out ISO 9000 for site procedures. Even the wording of the Standard doesn't make it easy for us because it refers to the site, but meaning the factory. Not the same thing at all. Those companies that invested in ISO 9000 (1 or 2) for Quality Assurance have done so because it will cost them less in the long run. Get it right first

time, and all that - the cheapest way to do a job, and one that enhances reputations, too.

The Titanic was a tight ship when it was in dry dock. Didn't do too well, once it got out on the high seas, though, did it? Tight ships, when it comes to doors and their security, are not restricted to factory floors. They have to perform at least as well, out where there are icebergs.

They're big and they're white, and known to be deadly dangerous. Vans that are big and white can be just as deadly. They should carry warnings. Their occupants, nice lads every one of them, do what they do as and when they see fit, and they're just as capable of sinking your ship.

Which goes down, with all hands.



Mike Davis, who runs Windowbase, talks to Mike Rigby about data security and what Windowbase does to guard against misuse.

Lock up your data

MR: A salesman leaves and joins a rival. Or two employees leave and set up in competition. Many of your customers follow. You believe the speed of their success is based on confidential information that can only have come from your company's database. Your data security is lax, and you cannot prove it, but you're sure they took a copy. Your sales are suffering. It must be a company's worst nightmare?

MD: (Mike Davis): Yes, data security is much neglected. Companies make back ups and then forget. How do they know someone hasn't walked off with their customer files?

MR: Well, how does Windowbase ensure its data isn't passed from company to company?

MD: Like BT, Thomsons, Ordnance Survey and others, Windowbase inserts codes into data that can be recognized. When the Ordnance Survey draws its maps, it subtly changes some of the correct information so that anyone reproducing those maps copies the mistakes. They are not obvious. Changing the height of a mountain by a couple of metres, putting an inn on the wrong side of the road, hyphenating a place name made up of two words. In all cases the data is usable, but clearly traceable when used by someone else.

MR: Like a fingerprint, something unique to you? But does anyone take action?

MD: Yes. A few years ago a settlement was reached with a

well-known company for several million pounds because Ordnance Survey data had 'unaccountably' crept into its printed maps. When you buy information from BT, Yell or Windowbase, you sign an agreement that restricts the usage to which the information is put. In our case, we restrict use to the company who signed the agreement.

MR: But how can Windowbase tell which customer's data has been misused?

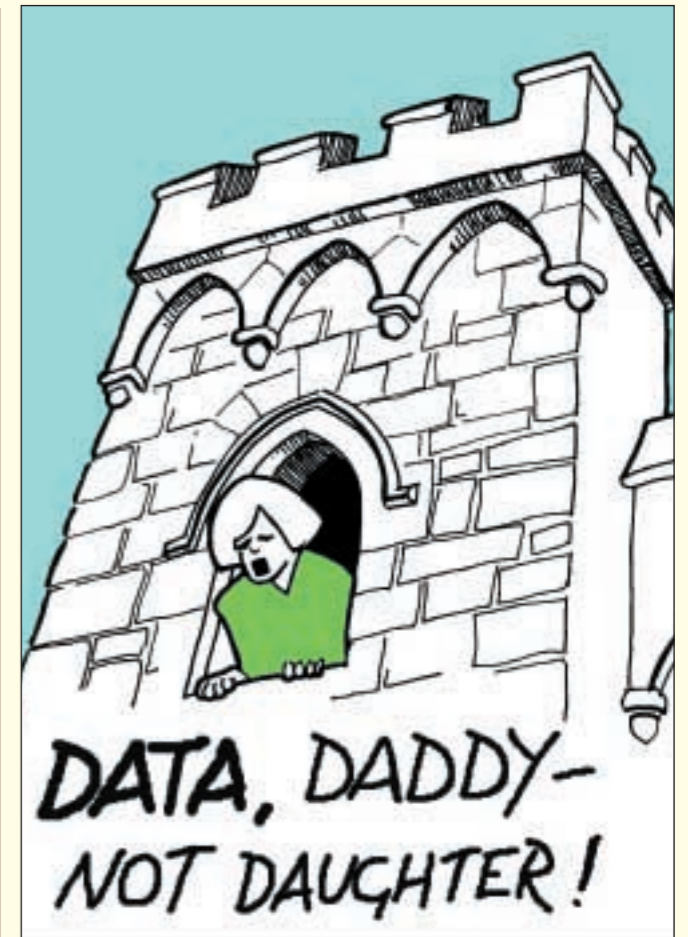
MD: You've heard of PGP ('pretty good privacy')? It's supposed to give secure ways of transmitting data over the Internet. It uses very large prime numbers to generate codes that are unique to users. We use a similar principle so that each database is tagged with a number of unique addresses. A combination of them means that we know for certain from which customer's database the information has come.

MR: For certain?

MD: The combinations give millions of variations for a single record. I just did a check and one of our addresses has 111,546,435 potential different combinations before we start repeating ourselves. Even when someone copies the data and changes it, because of the redundancy in the data, we can still demonstrate - in court if necessary - that the data came from us and from nowhere else!

MR: How do you find out?

MD: A number of friendly companies collect mailings and log calls for us. In some cases



we can see that our customers have not updated their database correctly - using addresses that are no longer current - so we advise them. We also like to know that our data is being used. Most are mailings from legitimate customers. Sometimes, however, we get a mailing (or call) from someone else.

MR: What happens then?

MD: A few turn out to be our licensees trying to help their customers, having forgotten the conditions of contract. We can accommodate this by making a small charge. But when it's a

rogue salesman or someone using their ex-employer's data we come down heavily. We demand the return of the data, and a payment from the offender for the use of it. Fortunately we've resolved these out of court so far. But someone who has taken our data about 'potential' customers will probably have taken even more valuable data on customers - turnover, prices, discounts, terms and contacts. So when we discover a breach of security we alert our customers so they can investigate this wider breach of security before it harms their business.

Getting to grips with partnering

ONE THIRD OF ALL UK CONSTRUCTION is now public sector-related. More than 400,000 homes a year were built every year in the 1960s, half of them by local councils.

In 2002 only 169,000 were built, and 162,000 the year before. Yet, according to the Government, Britain needs 220,000 to 230,000 new dwellings to satisfy demand. Some blame house-builders for the shortfall, others the Government, but the main problem is that private developers haven't filled the gap left by the public sector. Social housing is once again a recognised priority, and is destined to become even more important to the economy in years to come. Continued government investment in the public sector means that one third of all construction is now public sector related.

Once again, the public sector is the centre of attention. According to the Public Sector Quarterly Trends Report *, a recent survey from window systems company System10, The Decent Homes Standard is going to be the most important issue for Local Authorities in the next twelve months. Housing Associations rate it second - after Health & Safety.

But how services are delivered is also forcing change in the public sector. Partnering, with its emphasis on working closely with contractors over a period to deliver better value and improved services, is set to replace tendering with its arms-length relationships and obsessive focus on cost.

Now Local Authorities and Housing Associations are getting

to grips with partnering. Some have taken to it with enthusiasm: "Our partnering scheme has been going for 12 months. It's excellent because we know the contractor"; and "it works well for both parties. It's fairer and service is better. You know where you stand with the budget set aside."

Others distinguish between theory and practice: "We've been partnering for five years. Contractors make promises at the start of the contract but don't fulfil them. It should improve year by year," or: "Good in theory but the pitfalls are all the rules and regulations. Benefits are a better service." "Overall," one respondent says, "we are very happy with it, but contractors were not good at paperwork. We've sorted that now." The views of those who have yet to try partnering range from those who think it's a good idea full stop, those who believe in it but have questions about justifying value for money and the lack of energising competition, to the downright cynical 'it's just a buzz word'.

Partnering offers more but also demands more. Like all relationships it requires effort on both sides to make it work. Most specifiers and contractors seem ready to give it a go. They say it like they have a choice!

As usual, the quickest way to an inside track on public sector spending is Windowbase data - we can supply you with over 1500 named contacts in Local Authorities and Housing Associations. Take a look on www.winbase.co.uk for more details.

* Courtesy of System10 'Public Sector Quarterly Trends Report' Nov 2003



BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS communications appear to be the target for European Directives. In short we are to be told how to manage our businesses. This sounds just great for those businesses that are inundated by unwanted communications, but will it work? Or does it just provide more red tape for those who genuinely try to comply with the law?

Unfortunately, many communications today are international - with call centres in India, e-mailers in (or pretending to be in) USA, Russia or China, (and - just received - as I write this) junk fax senders in the USA.

So how does Windowbase - a supplier of business information that facilitates communication - react to this? Do I hear the words "Pot", "kettle" and "black"? So let's try to clarify the legislation and the facts . . .

Four sets of rules

There are four sets of legislation in the UK, relating to mailings, telephone selling, faxing and e-mail. As the Mailing Preference Service (MPS) is optional and relates only to consumer mailing, we won't pursue that further here.

The **Telephone Preference Service** (TPS) is a facility offered to private individuals, sole traders and partnerships, to register their phone numbers and be free from unsolicited sales and direct marketing calls. In England & Wales (the rules differ slightly in Scotland); those making such calls to a TPS registered number can be liable to a fine of up to £5,000 per call.

The **Fax Preference Service** (FPS) operates similarly, except that private individuals, sole traders and partnerships are already protected without the need for registration, and companies may apply to be on the FPS register. Increasingly we find that large companies are registering their fax lines, so it is becoming more difficult to carry out "faxshooting". Again, the penalty for calling a registered or 'protected' number can be £5,000 per call.

Obviously, the TPS and FPS can only be enforced through UK courts. We are not aware of anyone who has been found guilty under this legislation, but many have received warnings from the agencies running the schemes. Companies phoning or faxing from outside the UK may get away with it, but the nuisance probably means they will be unsuccessful in making sales to those who have deliberately registered.

For further information, please fill in your details and tick your area of interest below and return to:

Reader's name: _____

Company: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

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