



Approved Landscape Contractors
and Driveway Installers

Who cares wins!

Skills and service are key to success as Brits demand better customer care.

Big companies have spent a lot of time and money listening to their customer's needs. With features such as coffee bars at banks and supermarket crèches finding their way onto the British high street, the pressure is on for all traders to raise standards and go that extra mile to impress.

The Marshall's Register stamp of approval is a hallmark for quality workmanship that members should be proud of, but it is simply not enough to rest on your laurels, says Paul Dear, Head of Operations Marshall's register: "Excellence in customer service is now just as important as being a skilled contractor."

There are some basic do's and don'ts that may seem obvious, but when ignored, regularly result in customer complaints.

Neglecting telephone enquiries ranks among the most popular. As Paul explains, this can give contractors a bad reputation before they have even stepped foot on site.

"We get regular calls from customers who have not had their telephone calls returned. Even if you can afford to turn business away, you can't afford to get a bad reputation" said Paul.

And a hard earned reputation is something that can't be handed over along with a membership pack. Recommendations from neighbours or friends are often the most valuable endorsement a company can get.

Tools such as the Marshall's Contract and the 10-year Guarantee are particularly valuable to a contractor who wants to make a good impression.

They demonstrate a commitment to quality and professionalism that is unique to the Register and allows the customer to relax and enjoy the whole experience of their driveway or garden makeover.

After sales conduct is also crucial to securing more work through recommendation:

"A truly satisfied customer can generate more high quality sales leads than routine advertising. It's not a bad return on a bouquet of flowers or a few pounds spent putting a few snags right," concluded Paul.

Why not check your customer care skills against our top ten tips? Now is the time to leave the cowboys behind and build on the recognised foundations of the Marshall's Register. Now is the time to show that he who cares, wins.



A REGISTER CONTRACTOR TAKES TIME TO TALK

TOP TEN TIPS ON CUSTOMER CARE

- Provide a written quotation, never an estimate.
- Be professional. The right image can mean the difference between winning and losing an order, or holding and reducing your price. Make sure ALL your staff are professional too!
- Make it easy for customers to contact you: Keep your mobile phone switched on and with you. Leave the answer phone on when you are out, and check your messages.
- Return ALL customer phone calls ASAP... even complaints.
- Make the most of the Internet - Marshall's will even set your web pages up for you, completely free of charge.
- Use the Marshall's Contract - it safeguards your interests as well as your clients by minimising expensive misunderstandings and disputes.
- Provide the Marshall's guarantee, it gives your client peace of mind and is great value for money.
- Don't alter start or completion dates unless absolutely necessary. If you must, always keep your customer fully informed.
- Always clear rubbish and clean the site after work is completed.
- Liaise with your local trading standards office, they can provide lots of helpful advice.

It's Easy PC to net more sales

The first members to launch their free Marshall's Register web pages are now benefiting from an influx of on-line sales leads.

Web statistics show that one third of all UK homes now have access to the Internet and more homeowners than ever before are using the net for shopping.

With Marshall's Register on-line a space in this virtual shopping mall is free and you don't even need to have a computer.

Here's how to open your doors ready for business.

HOW TO GET YOUR FREE WEB PAGE

- 1) Complete the application form that was sent to you at the beginning of the year.
- 2) Supply images of previous jobs so that visitors can get an idea of the kind of projects you can undertake.
- 3) Decide how you want to receive your enquiries. They can come by e-mail, fax or phone.

On receiving your application Marshall's will build your individual site and link it to the main site at www.marshall's.co.uk

Arriving at your web page will be easy for visitors to the Marshall's site. A simple on-line search will locate approved contractors in their area along with names and numbers.

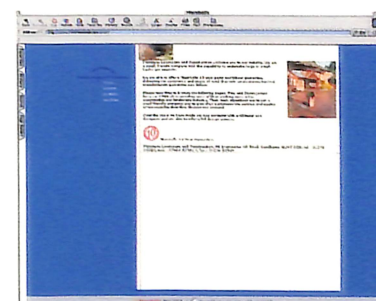
Sean Alexander, of Flintstones Landscapes, in Sandhurst, Berkshire, is revelling in the success of his new Marshall's Register website.

"I have been delighted with the response to my Internet site, which has resulted in more sales leads in a shorter space of time than routine advertising" he said. "I must admit that I was shocked by the number of people who now use the Internet instead of Yellow Pages to appoint tradesmen. Contractors who are not on-line are definitely missing a prime advertising opportunity. Setting up your Marshall's site takes only a small

amount of time and effort and the rewards are unbelievable," he added.

Marshall's understands that some members might not be familiar with using the Internet, so we're happy for you to concentrate on what you do best, whilst we help you to make the most of a new generation of Marshall's customers.

**For an application pack or advice,
contact the Register Helpline on:
0870 241 4781**



Register to the rescue

Unscrupulous contractors are still on the loose and giving our industry a bad name. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to bring peace of mind back to the paying public. So when customers want a driveway or patio that's guaranteed to look good for longer, there's only one gang to call... Marshalls Register.

Setting the standards

If your first contact with Trading Standards is in response to a complaint, the chances are that you're not up to date with your obligations as a supplier of goods and services.

Your local Trading Standards office is there to help you as well as the general public. A phone call to them might be the most important call you make today. Linda Birch from West Yorkshire Trading Standards, tackles consumer issues every day. In an interview with Register News, Linda tells us more about the help available to Register members.

Q) How can members of the Marshalls Register benefit from being in touch with their local Trading Standards office?

A) Trading Standards' job is to provide help and advice on consumer related issues. We can provide impartial legal advice to both public and traders. If you are faced with a customer complaint and don't know where you stand from a legal point of view, we can outline your rights and obligations.

Q) How can Register members get in touch with their local Trading Standards Office?

A) Your local authority will be able to put you in touch with the right office for your area, details of which will be in the Yellow Pages or telephone directory. Alternatively, try the Trading Standards website which can be found at: www.tradingstandards.net

Q) What is the most common complaint you receive from consumers relating to work they have had done in their home?

A) Not surprisingly they tend to revolve around the issue of money. A frequent question that we get asked is, "When is an estimate a quote?" This comes from countless consumers who have accepted a verbal estimate for a job and then been horrified to be billed for a different sum once the work is complete. It can be an offence under the Supply of Goods and

Services Act to charge above the odds for work when no quote is given so I would urge all contractors to provide written quotations to avoid disputes and subsequent legal action.

Q) What is your view on Marshalls 10-year Guarantee?

A) The guarantee gives consumers many additional rights in addition to their statutory rights. If anything should go wrong on a guaranteed job, the consumer has a reliable contact in Marshalls who will arrange for the work to be put right. Without a guarantee the contractor may be liable for the work. It is therefore in Register members' best interests to offer and provide the guarantee.

Q) Do you think consumers now expect better customer service?

A) Definitely. Standards are improving all the time and this has a knock on effect on everybody. There has been a significant increase in the number of formal complaints made in recent years, however, there are also more opportunities for people to voice their concerns.

Q) Do you have a final message to give to members of the Marshalls Register?

A) Trading Standards is very supportive of the Marshalls Register and encourages all members to keep up the good work. The guarantee and the Marshalls' Contract are both very effective in providing consumers with peace of mind and reducing the need for complaints. Don't forget, we're not just here to prosecute, we much prefer to offer friendly advice because prevention is better than cure.

Here's how a couple of Register members came to the rescue in the wake of some typical rogue rip offs!

Martin McNulty of Leicester had just settled down to his evening meal when the local TV station warned of suspect contractors working in the area. A man posing as a professional driveway installer had approached an elderly couple on their doorstep. He offered to lay a new drive for them, but the couple declined.

Later that day the couple returned home from a shopping trip to find that the gang had begun work on their driveway against their wishes. When they raised the alarm and sent the gang packing, they were left with an ugly and dangerous mound of rubble where their driveway once lay.

Disgusted by the way in which the gang



MARTIN McNULTY SAVES THE DAY FOR PENSIONERS

had preyed on an elderly couple, Mr. McNulty immediately offered his services to put the job right. He contacted Marshalls with a gesture to provide labour free of charge in return for products to lay a block paved drive.

Fortunately, this tale had a happy ending. Not only were the couple delighted with their new drive and the generosity of their local Register member, but the story received coverage in regional press and on television. Mr. McNulty took the time to demonstrate the difference between opportunists and professional contractors, for which he received due recognition.

A similar hoax led to a complaint from a customer in Liversedge, West Yorkshire. This time a company claimed to use Marshalls' products and set to work on a

100m² patio. Part way through the job, the customer began to get suspicious and contacted Marshalls complaining of terrible workmanship and uneven, waterlogged paving.

A Register inspection revealed that the flags were not manufactured by Marshalls and indeed the work was unlikely to have been carried out by a professional.

We contacted Yorkshire based member, Colin Gray of County Paving to save the customer from a very expensive encounter with the cowboys and are delighted to be able to promote another Register Rescue.

If you have evidence of rogue traders in your area, or have helped save the day for a distraught customer, we'd like to hear about it. Contact the Marshalls Register on 01422 300301.

Showing off



MARSHALLS AWARD-WINNING STAND AT GARDENERS WORLD LIVE

The Ideal Home Show attracted crowds of over half a million people looking for ideas and advice about home improvements. This year, Marshalls made a big impression with an impressive stand at the Earls Court Exhibition.

Visitors were able to view our driveway and patio paving, whilst learning about the stress free installation option offered through the Marshalls Register. A key feature of our marketing campaign was to promote

We're spreading the Marshalls Register message far and wide in 2001, including two major promotions at the country's largest home and garden exhibitions.

the unique 10-year Guarantee that offers customers total peace of mind.

Our team took thousands of genuine sales enquiries from people who were interested in having their driveway or patio professionally installed. We're now busy sending out brochures and contractor details, so get ready for those calls.

An even bigger attraction was created in June at BBC Gardener's World Live, another

major event in the home improvement calendar.

Thousands of garden enthusiasts descended upon the NEC to check out the latest garden designs and flower fashions. Marshalls occupied a prime spot in the arena and won the coveted 'Best Stand at Show' award. Visitors flocked to check out products and learn about locating their nearest Register member.

Getting the most from your merchant

12 bags of cement, 3 tonnes of sand, 240 paving flags and a couple of hot sales leads please! Anyone who thinks their local builders merchant is just a place that sells building materials is missing out on some key business development opportunities, so say Geoff Moulton and David Jackson of Marshalls' stockist sales team.



GH BROOKS OF HARROGATE PROVIDE HELPFUL ADVICE

The yard and counter staff in every builders' merchant see hundreds of visitors every month. Many of them are checking out products for a project on their list of home improvements and may need help locating a contractor they can trust.

Building better relationships with your merchant is therefore one way of gathering some red hot sales leads

"It's all about working together," said Geoff Moulton. "Register members are valuable customers for our stockists and building the right relationships can pay dividends for both parties. When Merchants ask customers about their project, they may have the opportunity to recommend a contractor. If you have a good relationship with your merchant that contractor could be you."

Providing your merchant with information about the Marshalls' guarantee and other benefits of your service, is also helping them to demonstrate better customer relations and secure more sales. What's more, it could mean the difference between them supplying a simple, low budget patio and the full range of products required for a professional driveway or garden makeover.

Merchant Steve Richardson of James Burrell Ltd, which has branches in Stockton, Gateshead and York, sees the benefits of the Register and is keen to

develop relationships with members using his branches.

"In the past, it's been difficult for merchants to recommend landscape contractors to consumers. With Marshalls taking the responsibility for vetting and approving contractors we are now confident that their Register members will carry out a driveway or garden installation to the highest standard.

Building relationships with our customers is very important to our business and we know which of our trade customers are Marshalls Register Approved we will be more than happy to recommend them to people looking for landscape and driveway contractors," said Steve.

So, next time you visit your local builder's merchant, don't be afraid to shake hands with the manager and have a chat about how you can help each other improve business.

"Every business person knows the importance of networking," concluded Dave Jackson, "the building trade is no different. It's amazing what a little time spent talking can achieve."

Welcome to Marshalls Register

At Marshalls Register 'listening to our contractors' and 'understanding their needs' are key priorities. Recently, we demonstrated just how much we VALUE your feedback when we welcomed Alan Williamson to the Register Team as Regional Consultant for the Scotland area.



ALAN WILLIAMSON

Geoff Poole	Southwest Region	07881 510076
Craig Brook	Northwest Region	07881 510341
Mark Plant	Northeast Region	07831 102727
Jim Dolan	Southeast Region	07768 984171
Alan Williamson	Scotland	07775 824161

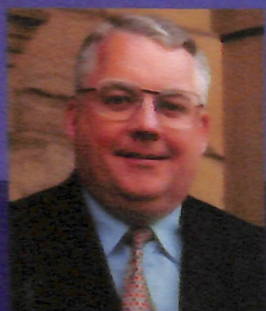
Alan Williamson has spent 20 years as a building contractor, most recently as a Marshalls Registered contractor with his business Distinctive Driveways. As a skilled contractor, Alan is all too familiar with the pressures of working "hands-on" to meet customer demands at the same time as trying to develop a profitable business.

Alan also appreciates the benefits of Register membership in helping contractors to build a reputation based on quality workmanship and peace of mind. It is precisely to help more contractors develop their business through membership that Alan has joined the Marshalls' team.

He said, "With the benefit of my experience, I aim to assist contractors in Scotland to maximise the opportunities for business development that the Marshalls Register brings.

My first priority is to get to know the contractors and understand their requirements. The garden landscape market is still booming. There is a massive demand out there and I hope to work with our Registered contractors to make sure they have the skills and resources they need to make the most of it."

Alan and his fellow regional consultants are available to meet you face to face and discuss your queries. If you have any topics you want to discuss, do not hesitate to pick up the phone and contact them.



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

PAUL DEAR

Q. You seem to be pushing the Marshalls' guarantee very hard. When I discuss this with my clients I feel like a

salesman from Dixons or Comet, trying to get them to part with more money. I must say, it makes me feel a little uncomfortable. (M. Goodey, Essex).

A. You have absolutely no reason to feel uncomfortable. The Marshalls' guarantee bears no comparison with the type offered by electrical retailers and is readily approved by Trading Standards Offices. Furthermore, the advice given to consumers by the Office of Fair Trading actually recommends the purchase of an insurance backed guarantee. At £25 per £1,000 spent, the Marshalls' guarantee is excellent value for money and provides your consumer with complete peace of mind. They are protected if you cease trading, (or even if you remain in business but 'refuse' to honour your obligations), and it also illustrates the confidence that Marshalls has in you. (By offering the guarantee you will also prevent the need for letters like the one below!)

Q. I recently had my driveway expertly block paved by one of your Marshalls Registered Contractors. However, since completion, I have learned that I should have received your manufacturers 10-year insurance, backed guarantee. I have contacted the contractor who has not been very helpful. My wife and I feel that an otherwise excellent transaction has been soured by his devious and unscrupulous actions. (Mr B, West Midlands).

A. This is a genuine consumer enquiry and several similar ones are received every week. We urge all members to prevent damaging complaints of this type arising about your company. Why not operate like our most successful members and include the Marshalls' guarantee within your quotation, absorbing the small premium as a business expense? These members have

learned that the provision of a manufacturers guarantee at no extra cost actually helps them win business, rather than lose it. If you aren't prepared to give it a try, you may find that even if you win an order, you may end up losing your reputation.

Q. I was impressed by your recent promotion of circular patios in House Beautiful magazine, is this something you will continue? (The Drive Doctor, Middlesbrough).

A. We used this as a pilot scheme to establish the feasibility of us 'selling' to the consumer on behalf of our members and our stockists. A number of vital lessons were learned, and we hope to develop this further next year. With the continuing development of the Internet, the opportunity to create a virtual 'shop window' for our members is becoming increasingly apparent. Those members who have taken up the free website production offer are already realising numerous benefits, so a promotion of this type could very well feature again, either in the press or 'on-line'.

Q. How do I claim my special prices when buying a Marcris blade? (Style Landscapes, Scotland).

A. The agreement we have negotiated on behalf of our members allows you to claim 5% off the purchase price of Marcris products. Simply complete the voucher that was sent to you in the trading partners portfolio together with your proof of purchase to Marcris and they will, in return, send you a cheque. Details of all the other trading partnership agreements with Belle, Finning Caterpillar, Probst and Wacker were sent to all members in early April. If you require another copy of the portfolio please call Helen Whitelock on 01422 300301.

Thank you to all those members who took the trouble to write. Whilst not all the comments we receive are favourable, we are always pleased to hear from you and we will reply to every letter received. Alternatively, if you would prefer to phone or fax us, we can be reached on 01422 306014 (phone), or 01422 307603 (fax).

Technical Focus

NUMBER 3 IN A SERIES OF TECHNICAL FEATURES

DRAINAGE OF DOMESTIC PAVED AREAS

Ineffective drainage on driveways and patios can lead to unsightly 'ponding' during wet weather. This issue's technical feature covers the standards set for drainage of driveways and patio's around the home.

All paved areas should be laid to allow water to drain off the paved surface reasonably quickly. British Standard 7533 :Part 3 : 1997 recommends, for block paving, the minimum of 1.25% crossfall and a 1% longitudinal fall. As an example this translates to a fall of 75mm across the width of a 3 metre wide driveway, or if conditions allow, 38mm fall to either side of the driveway from the crown. Along the length of the driveway, the fall will be 60mm in a 6 metre run.

BS 7533 :Part 3 : 1997 does allow a maximum of a 10mm variation in the surface profile under a 3 metre straight edge and therefore while the falls may be correct, the Standard does allow for a small amount of localised shallow ponding, due to slight variations in the surface profile.

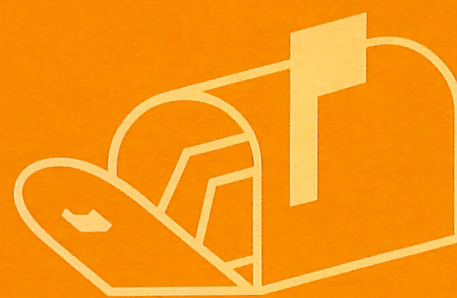
For most domestic construction, drainage can be into the adjoining flower borders/lawn, but for larger areas, there may be a need to introduce a drainage channel or linear drainage to collect the run-off. The outfall from the channel or the linear drainage should be connected into either a

combined drainage system if the area allows. Alternatively, with the trend to return water into the soil, a soak-away constructed a minimum of 5 metres from any foundations could be installed.

There are two areas which require special attention for drainage. Firstly, the area immediately outside the garage doors if the fall is towards the garage, secondly the junction between the driveway and the back of the footpath, if the driveway falls towards the footpath. In front of garage doors it is normal to install linear drainage, such as Eco-channel, which will prevent water running off the driveway into the garage. Where the driveway and the public footpath abut, it is an offence to allow water to run from the driveway over the footpath. In cold weather this can lead to the formation of ice on the footpath increasing the risk of an accident.

It is good practice to provide drainage in this area, either by incorporating a drainage channel immediately abutting the footpath, or again linear drainage. We do recognise that in certain cases it may be difficult to fit drainage systems against the existing footpath, especially if this is formed in a black top material on a granular sub base.

Drainage of the paved area is important regardless of the method of laying the paving. Sand bedded and jointed units still require proper drainage provision. Research has shown that the sand joints soon become impervious following the laying of the paving and must not be relied on as a means of allowing water to drain from the paved area. Areas which are laid to proper falls and have proper drainage provision, are less inclined to stain or experience any other kind of failure than areas where drainage has not been properly considered.



POST BAG

It's letters like these that help us to demonstrate how much the Marshalls Register is valued by our customers.

Congratulations to those mentioned below and also to those who, due to space constraints, could not be included.

"I would like you to know how pleased I have been with your approved contractors, **First Pave** of Basall Common, Coventry.

Mr Whitney took great pains over my driveway, which is pleasing to look at and a credit to the house."

P Barker, Warwick

"I am writing to tell you how pleased I am that I chose

Drives for Lancashire for my garden re-design. The whole experience can only be described as outstanding.

The most impressive aspect was their total commitment to creating a garden we (and they) could be proud of."

Robert Collon, Preston

"Thank you for your assistance in locating a contractor to carry out the laying of paths and patios in my garden. **Woodstone Exterior Designers** gave me excellent advice whilst producing a most reasonable quotation for the work done."

Keith Ahmed, South Shields.

"It gives me great pleasure to say how delighted I am with the driveway laid down by **Booker Landscapes** of Liverpool. The workforce was polite and professional - a credit to their business. I am pleased to be able to boast and show off my driveway to friends and passers by."

Derek Horrocks, Aigburth, Liverpool.

"Mr Steve Smith of **Shore Paving**, Shoreham was a credit to his own company and Marshalls good name. He was friendly, willing to listen to and answer my ideas and questions and was obviously only interested in producing a high quality job from the outset. It was refreshing to have a building job done by someone who is a real tradesman and not just interested in 'making a quick buck'."

Jack Pike, West Sussex



Marshalls

Southowram, Halifax HX3 9SY

Telephone: 01422 306000 Fax: 01422 330185

Customer Hotline: 0870 120 7474

Visit us on our website - www.marshalls.co.uk